

The Five Candles

Tonight we have come together to celebrate the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We gather to take pleasure in the "Light of the World." In John 8:12 Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** Christ's presence (His light) among us brings about five things:

The Lighting of the First Candle – **Hope** **"To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"** (Colossians 1:27)

We light the first candle in remembrance of the hope Christ gives to us. **Hope is a confident expectation the something good is about to happen.

Our future **hope** in Christ begins afresh each day. Without Christ, and the 'confident expectation' He shines into our lives, it would be very difficult to stay positive. Looking at the world through our local and national news, and seeing the death, violence, hatred and total disregard for fellow human beings, why would we have **hope** (expectancy) in our hearts? Because Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world!"** Together with Christ we are called to be a light in darkness, and to show our **hope** to others who are hopeless.

The Lighting of the Second Candle – **Peace** **"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Romans 5:1)

We light the second candle in remembrance of the **peace that Christ has brought into the world.

The peace of Christ encompasses all aspects of **peace**. The work of Christ in His life, death and resurrection points to directly "shalom" - a complete reconciliation with God. Without mankind being reconciled to God there cannot be peace on earth. The **peace** of Christ also provides access to a life lived in **peace** - *"a peace that surpasses all understanding."* Our hope in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ is the source of inner peace. And this inner peace (in itself) becomes part of our continuing and dynamic transformation into the likeness of Christ - the Prince of Peace!

The Lighting of the Third Candle – **Joy** **"Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy"** (1 Peter 1:8)

**We light the third candle rejoicing because of the overwhelming joy that Jesus has given to us.

The Bible is quite clear on the issue of joy: "Rejoice always"; "Rejoice in hope"; "Rejoice in the Lord always." This rejoicing is a response to the knowledge and belief that God provides for us and sustains us. Therefore, **joy** is an important part of our Christian life. However, it is often overlooked, and sometimes completely rejected. Being joyful includes appearing to be happy, but not as a result of forcing ourselves to smile - it should come as a result of appreciating Christ and knowing the living God. It's as simple as that. Our **joy** is not to be subject to the earthly situation in which we live, but only to the higher situation of being saved by grace. Furthermore, the **joy** of the Lord is our strength!

The Lighting of the Fourth Candle – **Love** **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"** (Romans 8:35)

**We light the fourth candle to remember the love that Jesus revealed in His coming and His dying for each of us.

Love was the grand principle which prompted the Almighty God to give His Son Jesus to die for sinners; and **love** was the impelling motive that brought Emmanuel from His throne, to this

fallen world, in order to save the lost. How great, how sublime was that scheme of His to save a perishing world! How vast was that **love** which enabled Him to execute this great plan! ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”***

The Lighting of the Fifth Candle – Christ ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”*** (John 1:1-5)

**The final candle is Christ Himself.

Have you ever been in a totally darkened room when the light was suddenly switched on? Though it takes a few moments of adjusting, something extraordinary happens. You can see! As your eyes focus, the light gives you the ability to see what you're doing, where you're at, and where you're going. Whenever Jesus arrives, it is a lot like that – **light** shattering the darkness.

When God first sent His Son into the world, mankind was separated from the goodness of God and walking in the darkness of sin. In this age of high-tech war, senseless violence, and degraded values, it would seem that the world has not really changed all that much in the last 2,000 years. Technology has advanced and the world population has exploded, but the presence of sin and darkness still stands as a gap between man and God.

However, just like fireworks bursting overhead, punching bright holes into the darkness, the coming of Jesus Christ brought perfect **light** to a needy world. It bridged the gap between God and mankind. And it still does! Christ Himself is a **light** that still has relevance today (in today's society). In fact, the “Light of the World” is what the world needs! It is a **light** that keeps people from stumbling. It is a **light** that never fails. It is a **light** that is full of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love! So remember, His glorious **light** can chase away all the darkness!