

**Sermon:** *Love's Light is Shining*  
**Text:** *I John 4:7 – 11*  
**Date:** *December 20, 2009 AM*  
**Place:** *Jesup First UMC*

There once was a hard-working man who retired to the countryside to spend his days hunting and fishing, and he was very happy ... but his wife was not. She said: *"I don't know why I have to live in this little shack without running water and electricity. I want to live like a lady."* So one day, he was out fishing and caught the biggest, largemouth bass, he'd ever seen. And he was about to throw it in the bottom of the boat when the fish spoke; it said: *"Sir, if you'll throw me back in the lake, I'll grant you whatever you wish."*

Well, the man loved his wife and he really wanted her to be happy and so, he said: *"I wish my wife was a lady, living in a proper house with water and electricity."* And when he got home, he found his wife living in a beautiful home with everything she had ever hoped for and she was happy ... for a while. But one day as he was getting ready to go fishing, she said: *"A queen like me shouldn't have to live in a house like this or drive herself around; I want to live in a mansion with servants and a driver to take me wherever I want to go."*

So, the old man went back to his lucky spot and sure enough, about a hour later, he snagged that big bass and he told the fish: *"I'll throw you back if you'll give my wife a house fit for a queen, with servants and a driver."* And he went home and found his wife humming and happy ... for a while. But one day as he was getting ready to go fishing, she said: *"You know, what I've always wanted is to be God. Maybe your fish can help."*

So, the old man went back to his lucky spot and sure enough, he snagged the old bass and he said: "I'll throw you back if you'll make my wife God." And he went home and the castle was gone and so were the servants and the car with its driver. And just then, he saw a cave nearby and he heard crying from the cave and he walked over and found ... a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger.

You know, like the woman in our story, it's easy for us to forget what God is like. She forgot about the incarnation, about the humility and the humiliation. She forgot that God loved us so deeply and so passionately that He gave up authority and power, He gave up riches and report, to live among the poorest of the poor. She forgot ... and so do we.

You see, it's easy to forget those things when you live where we live. Since the day Cain murdered his brother, our world has been filled with conflict and hatred. We learn from an early age to look after number one, to be suspicious of others, because nobody else cares and nobody else really matters. And then, Christmas comes and there's something about Christmas that reminds us that it's more blessed to give than to receive. There is something more than "Me." Christmas means more ... for through the miracle of Christmas, God shines His light into the darkness of our world.

Jesus once said: "*Greater love has no one than this than to lay down his life for a friend.*" In Jesus, we see God's love shining in the darkness of selfishness and hatred. But John said it goes deeper than that; he

said: *“Dear friends, since God loves us so much, we should also love one another.”* You see, an interesting thing happens when we truly love one another ... we become lanterns of God’s love and light in the world.

It was Christmas and the youth group decided to do a manger scene with Mary and Joseph and all the other characters, but since there was no baby in the church, they put a light bulb down in the manger and allowed the glow to represent the Christ child. Now, everything was going great ... until the shepherds came out. Dressing in flannel their bathrobes, they walked to the altar and looked down into the manger and with his back to the congregation, where only the other youth could hear, Jacob whispered: *“Well, Joe, when you gonna pass around the cigars?”*

Well, the whole cast fell apart. Oh, they tried not to laugh but it was useless. And it got so bad that the angel fell off her ladder and on the way down, she grabbed the backdrop and took it down with her. And then, it was like falling dominoes; within seconds, the set was in shambles and the only thing left standing was the manger with its radiant light.

And so it is with our world. Even when things lay in shambles, even when change and friends leave us or a family member dies; even when there are misunderstandings, conflicts, and confrontations, love’s light still shines. Friends, ... God loves us ... and so, we are enabled to love one another. So

**Shine Jesus, Shine fill this land with the Father’s Glory.**

**Blaze Spirit, Blaze set our hearts on fire.**

**Flow River, Flow flood the nations with grace and mercy**

**Send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light.**