

WHERE WE GOT OUR NAME

A City of Light Resource

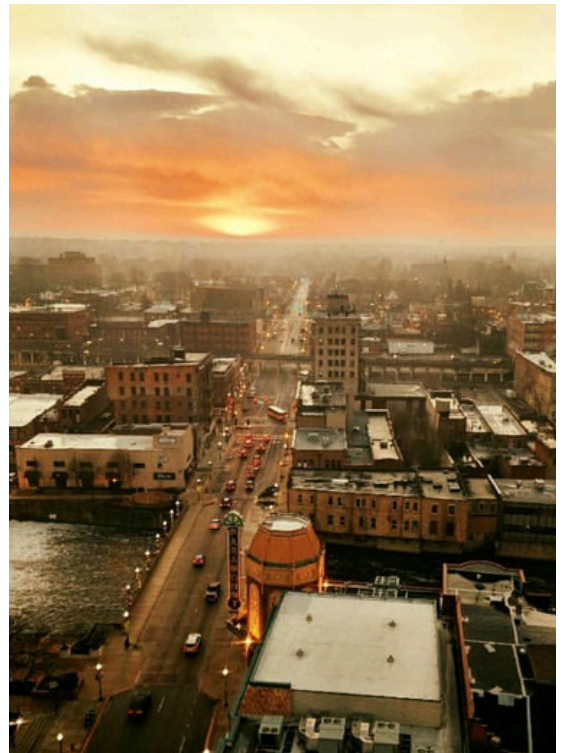
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This article is based on a message given by Fr. Trevor on August 30, 2015. The new church had just been given the name City of Light, based on Isaiah 60 and Matthew 5, which is described below. It was also our first Sunday morning service in Hill Elementary, making us not only a City on a Hill, but a City in a Hill as well! You can also listen to the audio [here](#).

Heaven Is a City

In Isaiah 60 the prophet describes a city where the light of the Lord overcomes darkness:

- It's covered in light, not darkness and fear of death. "For behold, darkness covers the land...But over you the Lord will rise" (v. 1a, 2b).
- It's for all people from all places. "Nations will stream to your light" (v. 3a).
- It belongs to the Lord and he lives there. "They will call you, The City of the Lord" (v. 14c)
- It's not dangerous. You don't need to lock the doors to stay safe, because God is there. "Your gates will always be open" (v. 11a).
- It's peaceful. You don't have to worry about murder or war, because everyone follows God's way. "Violence will no more be heard in your land, ruin or destruction within your borders." (v. 18a)



- It's literally life-saving to live there. "You will call your walls, Salvation" (v. 18c).
- It's so beautiful, when you look out the windows, you can't help but give thanks to God. "...and all your portals, Praise" (v. 18c).
- It's so full of God's presence, you won't need a lamp or the sun. "The Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory." (v. 19)(All verses Book of Common Prayer)

Centuries later, when the apostle John sees a vision of heaven, he describes a city. He says, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God.'" (Rev. 21:2, ESV) Then to describe the city of heaven, John quotes Isaiah 60, "And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light," (Rev. 22:5, ESV).

The Church Is a City

Jesus said to his followers several times, "I am the light of the world." (Jn 8:12, ESV) But in Matthew 5 he unexpectedly tells his followers, "You are the light of the world." (v. 14a, ESV) Jesus's plan for shining his light in the world is his church. He goes on to say that, "a city on a hill cannot be hidden." (v. 14b, ESV) Jesus brings the city of heaven now through his church—a city on a hill.

The church is a place where there's no more violence heard within our walls, the gates are always open, and the nations are welcomed. It is a place where people find salvation from sin and the fear of death. It is a place full of windows of worship into heaven where praise is eternally being sung around the throne. It is the place where we experience the Lord's transforming presence that changes us more and more into the image of Jesus, reflecting his glorious light in our hearts, homes, and neighborhoods.

As we become a church like this, we will see that "the kingdom of God has come near." (Mt. 10:7) Darkness is real, but Jesus's light can "scatter the darkness from before our paths." (Kenyan Easter Blessing)

Jesus Loves the City

Right before Jesus entered into his city, Jerusalem, one last time before he was crucified, he stopped outside the gates and wept for the city he loved. "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace." (Luke 19:42, NIV) On another occasion Jesus says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." (Mt. 23:37, NIV)



Jesus longs to gather the city into his arms and show its dwellers the way of peace. He sees the difference between what is and what should be—the contrast between the city of earth and its darkness and the city of heaven and its light. And we find ourselves living today in the difference between what should be and what is. And when Jesus sees that difference, he weeps for the city he loves. And so did Isaiah. And so should we.

In the chapter before Isaiah describes this heavenly city, Isaiah 59, he outlines the evil and the oppression going on in his own city. He says, your sin “has made a separation between you and your God ... Your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness.” (59:2a, 3, ESV) Later on, your “feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood ... The way of peace they do not know.” (59:7a, 8a, ESV)

But at the end of this chapter, right before Isaiah 60 begins, he says these hopeful words: “and a Redeemer will come to Zion.” (59:20a, ESV) And seven centuries later a redeemer did come to the city of Zion and stood outside the gates of Jerusalem and wept and said, “Oh, if only you knew the way of peace.” And then he walked into that city where they were quick to speak lies and falsely accuse him, feet were quick to shed innocent blood, and hands were defiled by blood as they beat him and crucified him.

And we were all there because we have all left the way of peace and walked the way of violence. We all have blood on our hands and lies on our lips. But by the power of his light, Jesus turned the way of violence into the way of peace. He entered into our darkness and death and he defeated it. On the third day when the women who followed Jesus came to the empty tomb, the words of Isaiah the prophet came true:

***Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.
For behold, darkness covers the land;
deep gloom enshrouds the peoples.
But over you the Lord will rise,
and his glory will appear upon you.
They shall call you, The City of the Lord.***