



This will be my last journal entry in this place, for today is my last day here. *I'm not sure if I'm ready to leave. I've been the lightkeeper for this lighthouse for as long as I can remember, taking over the job from my father, who learned it from my grandfather. Our family has kept the light burning for many years, and I've helped countless ships navigate their way through this dangerous place. I wonder how many lives have been saved along this coast. I guess you might say this has been a lighthouse of salvation, helping keep people safe as they avoid the rocky cliffs.*

*Years ago I used to watch my father fill the oil in the lamp and trim and light the wicks. I learned how to wind the clocks and clean the lens and the windows. When electricity came to this remote place, I changed the bulbs in the lights instead of filling the oil. It was much easier to maintain this lighthouse with this newer technology, but sometimes I missed the old days and how I took care of this place. Now with wireless connections, people on the mainland can tell when a bulb needs replacement and can send someone out here to do it. It's more convenient, but the ole lighthouse just won't be the same.*

*No longer will anyone live here day to day, and I will miss this place. I wonder if the lighthouse will miss me.*

*Although the change makes me somewhat sad, we've come a long way from those who lit fires on hilltops thousands of years ago as a signal to boats. Some suggest that the first lighthouse structure was built 4000 years ago, so I stand in a long line of lighthouse keepers.*

*When I was younger, I remember asking my dad, "Why do we do this boring job? Anyone could do it? Why us?"*

*He pulled a Bible off the shelf and he read from the prophet Isaiah,*

*Listen to me, O coastlands,  
pay attention, you peoples from far away!  
The LORD called me before I was born,  
while I was in my mother's womb he named me...  
I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*

*I didn't know who that Isaiah guy was at the time, but the words seemed so important to my dad. I remember Dad saying, "God called Isaiah to bring a message to the coastland and to people far away. Even*

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*before Isaiah was born, God invited him to bring a message of hope, for Isaiah reminded the people that they were a light to the nations, a way to see God more clearly, to find salvation. That's what we lightkeepers do—we help people find salvation by warning them to avoid the rocks. We help them find safety so they can live longer lives. There's nothing more important than this job of being a lighthouse keeper, for we help hundreds of people navigate these waters every year."*

*From then on I thought, What else could be more important?*

*From that day forward I never felt bored again, and I learned to love my job of being a lighthouse keeper. I was proud to follow in the footsteps of my family and keep the light burning. Even if I will no longer live in this place, this lighthouse will continue to keep people safe, and that's what it's all about—being a lighthouse of salvation.*

*This may be my last journal entry as a lighthouse keeper, but somehow I imagine that my role of shining a light into the world is not yet over. May God continue to guide me.*

Oh my. I didn't see you all here. You must be the church group coming for the tour of this lighthouse, possibly the final tour. I'm retiring, and since no one else will live here, I don't know if tours will occur or not.

We'll begin in the gallery where I have pictures of some of my favorite lighthouses. Being that you're from northern Indiana, you live near quite a few lighthouses, for in Michigan you can find around 120 of them, which is more than any other state in our country.

The first one built in Michigan is the Fort Gratiot (grash-it) Lighthouse on Lake Huron. It was built in 1825 but collapsed in 1828 and had to be rebuilt a year later. I like this one since it reminds me that even if one fails and falls down, one's life can be rebuilt again, just as the prophet Isaiah reminded God's people when they were struggling in exile. God reminded them they were still a light, that God had not abandoned them.



This picture shows the most remote lighthouse in the world, out in the Atlantic Ocean, a few miles from the Vestmann Islands south of Iceland. To change the bulb, one has to use a helicopter to reach it. This

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lighthouse reminds me that even when one is alone, we still need one another. And even when tasks in life seem difficult, such as replacing this lightbulb out in the middle of nowhere, there's always a way to get the job done.

Before you came, I was remembering how my father told me about the prophet Isaiah, who reminded the people that they were a light.

In his people's dark dungeon of exile, Isaiah lights a torch. As extraordinary as it sounds to those dispirited captives, Isaiah informs them who they really are. They are torchbearers. Their God is calling them to be "a light to the nations."

But how can that be? Even after the Persian King Cyrus arises out of nowhere, bringing Babylon to its knees and sending the exiles home, they struggle to live into this call to be torchbearers. Their nation is literally in ruins. Who, among the great nations of the world, will pay them any mind?

Many centuries pass. An aged man who has spent his life waiting for messiah is standing in Jerusalem's temple, cradling a baby in his arms. The man is Simeon. The child, of course, is Jesus.

Simeon passes the torch, that day, to this 12-day-old child. He is to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). The old man's words echo Isaiah's ancient prophecy.

Not so long after that, the boy Jesus and his parents have become exiles themselves, living in Egypt. Very likely, they're dwelling in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria, home to a thriving Jewish community.

As the sun sets each night over their city of refuge, Mary and Joseph look up and see a blazing beacon: the fire kindled atop the Pharos, that massive lighthouse looming over Alexandria's harbor... [This is the next photo in my gallery.]



Back in his native land, Jesus grows into maturity and gathers a band of disciples around him. He makes it clear he has no intention of bearing the torch alone. In his Sermon on the Mount, he passes the torch to them: "You are the light of the world ... let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:14-16).

The torch is now ours. What will we do with it?

Thanks for coming on this lighthouse tour. Be a lighthouse of salvation. Reflect God's light.

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<sup>1</sup> *Homiletics*, January 15, 2023.