

Rev. David Huber  
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We used to play a game called “Red Light, Green Light” when I was a child. We would line up at a ‘starting line’, and the person who was “it” would yell “green light”, allowing us to run forward, or “red light”, requiring us to stop. Anyone running after a red light was out. The first to the finish line was the winner. As an adult, I play a similar game with real traffic lights. Especially on Clairemont Avenue. I never intend to play, but one or two other drivers seem to always insist that we are. They race from the light when it turns green, just so they can get to the next red light faster and wait to do it again. We who are wise know the light will change to red before we get there, so we go slowly to arrive at the light just after it turns green and coast through it without wearing out our brakes. I don’t know where the finish line is, or what prize is won, but I hope for their sake it’s worth the effort.

What I find so interesting about this behavior is that we know the lights are there. Unlike the child’s game in which “red light/green light” are said totally at random, we can look ahead and see the lights and compensate for them. Imagine if we could see the red lights on the road life. Unfortunately, life models the Interstate: wide-open with no foreseeable stops, only the sudden ones of road construction, an accident, or an animal on the road. Just like the real life red lights of a layoff, death, or illness. Or the more personal red lights we create by our failures: hurting a loved one or ourselves, feelings of guilt or shame, or feelings of being worthless. Our sins have great power to haunt, slowing us down like towing an anvil. Maybe we get so burdened with guilt or fearful of being going forward that we put the car in reverse. Life, however, has no reverse. As much as we might wish to undo something, we cannot. But there is good news in that! Like our state motto, the only direction God made us for is forward. God did not create us to live in the past, be stuck in the present, or fear the future. And so God sent us a Christmas gift to relieve us of the burden of our past and give us hope for the future. Jesus is the green light of unconditional love and forgiveness that frees us from guilt and shame, from the burdens of our humanity. Jesus didn’t come to punish us. We do that well enough to ourselves. Jesus came to liberate. No sin we commit is more than Jesus can forgive. No matter what we have done, Jesus’ grace is greater. God wants only life for us. We can’t see the red lights in our futures, but when they pop up, we can trust in Jesus’ redeeming power to give us the green light to get past them and eventually move into eternal life. As you enjoy the reds and greens of Christmas, remember that red lights are only temporary because the green light of God’s love and grace is eternal. May you know God’s peace and grace this Christmas.

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