

Let There Be Light

Genesis 1:3-5

Matthew 5:14-16

John 1: 1-5

With the end of daylight savings time, we are coming into the time of cold darkness in the Northern Hemisphere, aren't we. And there are those who will say we are entering into another time of darkness in the life of our nation and in our world. So perhaps it behooves us to talk not about the darkness but rather the light as we go into the Advent season. It may be a very important discussion to remember as the year ends and the new one begins. (And I swear I wrote the basis of this sermon before I knew the lights had been upgraded in this room!)

Did you know there are 333 references to light in the Bible, from the passage we heard from Genesis this morning, which started it all, to Revelation 22, the very last chapter in the Bible which reads: *"And there will be no more night; they need no **light** of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their **light**, and they will reign forever and ever."*

Why is light mentioned so many times in Scripture? Because God ***is*** Light, and that Light is what we have to focus on.

This means that it is also true that the opposite of Light, darkness, or absence of light-- is what we have to overcome as we go forward. Let us consider this further.

Close your eyes for a minute, and imagine yourself to be in a dark cave—so dark that you can't, as they say, "see your hand in front of your face." A space where no light penetrates. It would be so dark that if you move, you have no spatial perception, and you wouldn't know if you were moving right or left, or even up or down. That would be what our lives would be like without the Light that is God. Then suddenly, way off in the distance, a small light starts to shine. What would your eyes do? They would turn to and focus on that light wouldn't they? And that light would start to give you some direction. You could move towards the light, or you could move away from the light, but instinctively you would move towards the light, and towards warmth and safety. That is what God's light does for us.

Now let's think about this another way. We believe that inside of each one of us is that spark of light and life that is a bit of the Divine light. So what if each one of us started to shine our small shy light in the dark cave? Soon, the darkness would be gone, and the room would be full of beautiful light. Our passage out of Matthew tells us to not hide our lights, but to let them shine. What if we did that in this dark world? How would that change things? What if we each became one of a thousand points of light in this dark world?

Some of you may remember that phrase, "a thousand points of light." *The term was used by George H.W. Bush in his speech accepting the presidential nomination at the 1988 Republican National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. In the address Bush likened America's clubs and volunteer organizations to "a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky."*^[2]

He reprised the phrase near the end of his speech, affirming that he would "keep America moving forward, always forward—for a better America, for an endless enduring dream and a thousand points of light."^[2]

He repeated the phrase in his inaugural address on January 20, 1989:

I have spoken of a thousand points of light, of all the community organizations that are spread like stars throughout the Nation, doing good. We will work hand in hand, encouraging, sometimes leading, sometimes being led, rewarding. We will work on this in the White House, in the Cabinet agencies. I will go to the people and the programs that are the brighter points of light, and I will ask every member of my government to become involved. The old ideas are new again because they are not old, they are timeless: duty, sacrifice, commitment, and a patriotism that finds its expression in taking part and pitching in." Wikipedia

What if each one of us, as the children's song says, bravely let our little lights shine as we strive to do God's good work in this world, one little candle at a time, until there are a thousand, no, a million billion little spots of light? We could obliterate the darkness around us one light at a time. If you ask me, that's the only hope we have as a human race. We have been only too willing to wallow in the darkness when left on our own.

In John, Jesus tells us: *"I am the **light** of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the **light** of life."*

As I said, it is appropriate to talk about this Light as we go into the season of Advent. Let us consider the state of darkness in the world at the time of Christ's birth. The Romans had been in control of the area for more than 30 years, and despite the description "Pax Romana" (The peace of Rome) the lands Rome held were only peaceful because the people had been subjugated and were afraid to resist. If they did resist, such resistance was met with a quick and brutal response. Crucifixions like the one Jesus experienced, were common. People were often crucified on the side of the road, and their bodies were left there to decompose as a reminder to passersby what would happen to them if they defied the authority of Rome. For the Jews, the Romans were just the latest in long line of oppressors. Many were beginning to feel that God had abandoned them. But just as it looked the darkest, there were angels appearing to shepherds in a field, and a great star shone above a cave that was a stable, and the light was reborn into the world in the form of a tiny baby, who would be Jesus Christ. Always the light is born again. Remember that. The light is always born again.

That is why, to me, light is integral to Christmas. The candles, the bubble lights, (My favorite as a child), the twinkle lights. These all represent the tiny points of light that appeared in the dark at the birth of Christ. They hold the magic of Christmas.

And so as we go into the new year that is full of uncertainty and maybe the beginning of a time of darkness, let us do so while keeping laser focused on the light that shines in the darkness, God/Jesus/Spirit, and let us, each one of us, be a tiny point of light to help lead others to the great source of light, Jesus Christ. And if someone's light falters, and we all will falter at some point or another, let us lend that person some of our light. Remember that a candle used to light another candle does not diminish in its own light, but rather the light expands when shared with another.

Let's let our lights shine, and God will declare it good.

Please God, let it be so, Amen.