

2023 02 05 – This Light of Mine

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20 (The Inclusive Bible)

Here we are in the midst of the Season of Epiphany, a season that is centred around light. On Epiphany Sunday we celebrated the journey of the Magi as they followed the light of a star to the child, Jesus. The season of Epiphany will end with Transfiguration Sunday, when we will remember the story of Jesus shining like a beacon of light on the top of a mountain. In North America, this liturgical season coincides with the lengthening of days following the winter solstice and we delight in the fact that the light of the sun is appearing a little earlier each morning and disappearing a little later each evening. Light has a special meaning during the season of Epiphany.

On Friday, I took part in a contemplative online gathering that was offered by St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon. It was a time for quiet reflection and meditation and the theme was centred on the celebration of Candlemas. I'll be honest, until I learned about this gathering, I had had never even heard of this particular ritual. Candlemas is a tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and is celebrated every year on February 2nd. The theme is Jesus as the light of revelation, the light that reveals the Love of God to all people. This theme of light is emphasized by the fact that parishioners are invited to bring candles to the service so that these candles, these sources of light, may be blessed by the priest.

Light comes from so many different sources. How many can you name? (wait for answers: the sun, the stars, the glow of the moon, the flame of a candle or

campfire, flashlight, electric lights in our home, offices, streets, Jesus as the light of the World). We could argue that our infrastructures now creates too much light, so much that we can no longer see all the stars in the sky. But today we are not really talking about all these external sources of light, are we? We are instead focussing on the light that is within each one of us.

Jesus was sitting on a mountainside with his disciples gathered around him and a crowd behind them, when he said, "You are the light of the world." I can just imagine their response. Even if they didn't say it out loud, I'm sure most of them were thinking, "But that's your job, isn't it? You're the one who is supposed to bring light to the world. I'm just following you around, maybe reflecting a little of your light sometimes. I'm certainly not strong enough, or smart enough, or spiritual enough or energetic enough or talented enough to actually be the light."

It's so easy to think that way isn't it? It's so easy to assume that we don't have what it takes to be the light. Sometimes we feel that way because someone in the past has told us that we're not good enough. Sometimes we feel that way because we've never really had the chance to explore a particular gift or talent that we have been given. Sometimes we feel that way because we think that it's better to be humble than to suggest that we have something wonderful to offer. Sometimes we feel that way because we have tried before and failed, and we're not sure we want to try again.

"You are the light of the world." When Jesus spoke these words, he was telling his disciples and all the people gathered on that mountainside, that they did have

something to offer the world. That each one of them had God-given gifts that they were supposed to share. That God had lit within them a flame of love and compassion, a light that shines, a light that was meant to be seen. He said,

You don't build a city on a hill, then try to hide it, do you? You don't light a lamp, then put it under a bushel basket, do you? No, you set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before others so that they may see your good acts and give praise to your Abba God in heaven.

What does your light stand look like? Where does your light need to shine?

How are you being called to share God's love with the world? Will you be shining your light in one of the committees or interest groups in this congregation? Will you be leading a house group and helping to form connections within our church family? Does your light stand exist within another non-profit organization here in town? Will your light be shining at your workplace or within your own home?

We all have so many opportunities to shine our light before others.

Some of you may be thinking, "You know my light has been shining for a long time and, at my age, it may be time to take a break." That's totally understandable, sometimes it is good to step back and let others take the reins. But just this week, I was reading an excerpt from a book called *The Gift of Aging* by Joan Chittister. Thanks to Ray Friesen for sharing this reading in his Friday email blog. In her book Joan reminds us that:

In every generation there is an accumulated amount of experience which says something about life that is, at the same time, both unique and universal. It comes from the simple act of living a recollected, a reflective life. (page 16)

You, our elders, have much wisdom and insight to offer, your light, rather than being dimmed is actually brightened by your extra years on this planet. As Joan Chittister points out, you are the ones who can assure in difficult times that, “there is always a resurrection in each of our lives, if we only believe in it, and give ourselves to its coming” (page 17).

No matter what our age, we all have been given the light of God that shines in and through us. In this season of Epiphany let us celebrate light in all its forms. Let us remember not only the light that shines all around us, but also the inner light that is ours to share. We are called to shine that light so that others may recognize the love and compassion of God in us.

I am going to end with these words from Steve Garnaas-Holmes. When reflecting on today’s scripture, he wrote:

Einstein told us:
matter is just energy holding still.

Light is the energy of God,
which is love moving.

“Let there be light,” God said,
and you were conceived.
You are love made matter,
Word made flesh,
the light of God, the light of Being,
momentarily here in this form,

shining, radiating God.

You don't need to produce it
or generate it. It's who you are.
When you are truly yourself

it shines.

The world sparkles
with people walking around gleaming.
Even on our deathbeds, we glow.

Trust your light. Give thanks.
Open the shutters of your lantern.

Let your light so shine before others,
that they may see by it,
and glorify God.

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May it be so. Amen.