

“Brother Sun: You Give Light through Him”

Psalm 104: 19-23; Ephesians 5: 8-13

Today is the first Sunday in Lent and as you have probably heard me say, our theme is “Season of Creation”. It is my hope that we take this time as we journey towards the Cross as a time to re-establish our connection with God’s creation. I don’t hope this simply because it is a timely conversation considering the UN Climate Change Conference that occurred this past December. I don’t want this re-establishment of our connection with Creation because “being green” is now the hipster way of life.

No-the main reason I am wanting us to take the next 40 days to re-establish, to restore our connection with God’s creation is because like us, all of creation is waiting, waiting for that day when healing and wholeness fills our whole world, waiting for God’s Kingdom to be fulfilled here on earth. But this reconciliation of God’s creation cannot happen, will not happen as long as we view creation as something to be used and abused. This healing of all creation cannot happen as long as we ignore the cries that fill the air, water, land and seas. This promise of wholeness for all of God’s creation, including us, cannot and will not happen as long as we as people of faith refuse to fulfill our part of the covenant-the covenant

which binds us together, the covenant which names us as partners with God in the care and love of creation. Reconciliation cannot and will not happen until we as people of faith see ourselves as part of the very Earth from which we are made.

But until that time comes, all of creation is waiting, waiting for the revealing of the children of God. But until that time comes, all of creation, including us, is groaning, crying out for reconciliation, as we become stuck deeper and deeper in a cycle of abuse, neglect and brokenness.

So in order to help us begin the process of breaking that cycle and restoring our connection with God's creation, I am inviting us all to use the next 40 days to, as one of my colleagues says, to reflect on two of God's greatest books of revelation-Creation and Scripture. May we realize that "This special time in the church year always comes when the days are lengthening with the arrival of spring., realize that during Lent not only will the hours of daylight become longer, but we will also witness the renewal of the earth as flowers blossom, trees bud, and the wildlife absent during the winter months make a reappearance." "Over the next 40 days, may we experience and understand that God desires for each of us... a renewal not unlike that which we observe in nature, only this time this renewal awakens our souls."(Lon Oliver)

Let us now turn to our Scripture texts for this morning: Psalm 104: 19-23 and Ephesians 5: 8-13

(Read Scripture)

Our two texts talk about light. In the psalm, we are told the light of the sun gives order to the people's day. They are awakened by the sun's morning light and they know it is time to go to work.

The same holds true for our Ephesians text. Paul calls the community gathered in Ephesus to be children of the light-meaning now is the time to be awakened by the light of God and get to work bringing about the Kingdom of God.

It is funny how two very different texts written thousands of years apart, written to two different communities understand the same thing: People need to be awoken to the light so that they can be about the work of the day!

Now, let's be honest how many of us really have the luxury of allowing the morning light to awaken us each day? If I had to guess, I'd say not many. Usually what awakens us each morning are the blaring noises from our alarm clocks or the constant buzzing of our electronic devices-all insistent we get up, all inhumane noises that startle us awake, all going off again and again while we fumble and stumble around for that elusive snooze button.

Isn't that one of the worst feelings in the world, the shock of being forcibly awoken by the harsh tones of our electronic devices? Then after that rude awakening, we wander around aimlessly, bumping into walls, still half asleep, trying to remember what's so important that we have to get up so early. That's why people retire. It's not because they want to begin a new phase in their lives. No, it's because they don't want to have their alarm clocks startle them awake ever again!

It's not natural. In an attempt to control our world, we as humankind have created devices that break us away from the natural order of things. We have disrupted the natural cycles, the natural rhythms of our world and of our lives. We have done this in so many harmful ways that is it any wonder we feel chaos sneaking into our world again?

That's what I love about Psalm 104. It reminds us of the natural order of things. As people of faith, one of the first things we learn is that on the first day God created light. "God called the Light Day and the Darkness God called Night. And it was evening and there was morning, the first day."

These very words remind us of the natural rhythms that should order our world, order our lives. They remind us of the natural order that fills God's creation. These very words found at the beginning of our story as people of faith remind us of the creative power of our God, the creative power to bring forth new beginnings,

new possibilities for all of God's creation. And it all starts with the power and life-giving nature of light.

Think about it: God's very first act of creation was overcoming the chaos. God did this by bringing forth light. Through this one act, the darkness no longer trapped God's creation in fear. It no longer held God's creation in chaos. Now there was light. Now there was life. Now, through the power and life-giving nature of light there were new beginnings, new possibilities for all of God's creation.

Which brings us to our Ephesians text. Just as the morning sun awakens us to the new beginnings of the day, the light of God awakens us to the new beginnings that await us as we step out from the darkness and embrace the life-giving nature of God's love and grace. There are new possibilities for healing, wholeness, and community surrounding us. There are new beginnings for hope stirring our hearts, awakening us to God's Kingdom in our midst. The light of God awakens us as people of faith to the natural rhythms of grace, love and mercy that enrich our faith. God set forth light in the beginning, creating a nature cadence that orders our world, that orders our lives. "There was evening, and there was morning, the first day." "Now faith, hope and love abide. These three and the greatest of these is love."

See a natural cadence, a natural order, a natural rhythm to our faith. We are called to live as children of the light, stepping out of the darkness that holds us in chaos and fear. We are called to step into the light of God which shines in us, which shines on us, transforming us into beacons of love and grace for all of God's creation.

Or let me put it this way: There is a remote village in the Himalayans that has existed for 1,000 years without electricity... that is until recently. Just last year a team from Global Himalayan Expeditions brought solar power to this village. The interesting thing is that for over 10 years, this village had been sending applications and requests to the local authorities begging them to bring light to their village but to no avail. They sat in the darkness, waiting. Until this engineer who quit his lucrative job in the United States awakened them to the power of the light.

Here's how it all got started:---The engineer saw the darkness trapping this village both figuratively and literally. He noticed the basic lack of amenities and infrastructure. He noticed the failing education system. He noticed the lack of opportunities for the young people, causing them to move away which then destroyed the sense of the community that had sustained this village for centuries. This engineer noticed the darkness and realized this region needed attention.

So he brought them into the light both figuratively and literally. He made the trek out to this remote village with a team of other engineers who had immersed themselves in the study of renewable energy. Once they got there, they realized “traditional” energy sources weren’t going to work. They would never be able to run the lines and do what they needed to do to fit this village into that system. But they realized this village was a perfect location to capture the power of the Sun. By capturing the power and life-giving nature of the light, they brought forth new beginnings, new possibilities for this village.

Now this doesn’t seem like such a big deal for those of us who take for granted that whenever we go to flip on a switch or press a button on our electronic devices, a light will come on or we will have power. We don’t know how it works. We don’t care how it works. We just know with a slide of a finger, we have power. But for this village, this system that captured the power of light was life-changing.

Because now, they were relieved of the poisonousness fumes generated from the oil lamps that they had used for lighting and cooking. Now the villagers were able to work for four additional hours, contributing an increase to their income. Now their sense of community wasn’t destroyed because folks had to leave to making a living. The young people could stay in their village to work and learn. Because of the power of the light, new programs have been developed for this region, programs that teach sustainability, programs in which the villagers are now

sharing their knowledge of solar power with others. Because of the power of the light, this remote village in the Himalayans which had been in the darkness for 1,000 years now has a robotics lab and a Disney playroom for its students. In this remote Himalayan village they have experienced the power of light and the new beginnings it brings.

As people of faith we know what that feels like. What it feels like to be awakened by the light. We know what it feels like to have the warmth of the light surround us and open our hearts. As people of faith we know what it feels like to first experience the power and life-giving nature of light. Because of the light, we stepped out of the darkness, darkness that trapped us in chaos and fear. We stepped into the Light and we experienced the transforming gift that is God's love and grace.

And now that we have been awakened by the Light, now is the time to start going about the work of our day, the work of sharing God's grace with others, the work of sharing God's love with others. Now is the time to go about the work of our day as people of faith by sharing the power and life-giving nature of God's Light with others.

As people of faith, let us put away the noisy alarm clocks of the world. Put away the constant buzzing of devices that disrupt the natural rhythms of our lives,

things that send our world into chaos. Instead, let us be awakened by God's Light and start going about the work of our day.

Because just like before when God first created the world and overcame the chaos, the building of God's Kingdom here on earth all starts with Light. Light brings forth life. Light brings forth new beginnings. Light brings forth new possibilities.

Light reminds us there is a natural order, a natural rhythm to our faith. "Now faith, hope and love abide. These three and the greatest of these is love."

For too long, the world has been trapped in darkness, filled with fear and chaos.

Now is the time for us to bring for the Light.

May it be so. Amen.

