

A communion meditation delivered by the Rev. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, September 7, 2008, dedicated to memory of Dorinda K. White and to the honor of Mark S. Williams, who have lovingly dedicated themselves to the children of First Church, and always to the glory of God!

“G.L.O.W.”
God Lights Our Way

Psalm 119, 33-40;
Romans 13,8-10;
Matthew 18,15-20

+++++

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.

+++++

God said, “Let there be light” and there was light (Genesis 1:3).

The divine word shatters cosmic silence and signals the beginning of a new order. With effortless spirit and absolute sovereignty, God creates. In Hebrew - **“y’ hi”** or *“let there be”* is reserved only for the creation of celestial phenomena. And God’s first celestial creation is **light**.

It is light that serves throughout scripture as a symbol of life, joy, hope, justice and deliverance. It is light that uncovers darkness and clarifies that which has been concealed. It is light that functions throughout our faith experience as a symbol for God because light itself is not visible but makes everything else visible. As the Psalmist says in 36:10, "By Your Light, O God, do we see light." (*Etz Hayyim: Torah and Commentary*, pp. 4-5)

"God lights our way." Nothing could be closer to the Truth! From the beginning of creation and our own beginning at birth, we are creatures who move from darkness to light.

Although many well-meaning Christians will tell you that to TRULY experience conversion you MUST be BORN AGAIN, and baptized again, the truth of scripture is that most people go through a gradual change. Like the sun rising in the east, most conversion is change that ever so subtly transforms a human life over time. Throughout the New Testament, Luke, Paul and Peter contend that conversion to Christ happens when the light of God breaks into our existence. **Each proclaims that conversion is turning from darkness to light.**

In Acts 26, Luke writes of Paul's conversion. Paul tells King Agrippa his conversion came in four steps: first, his eyes were opened; then he turned from darkness to light; then his power was transferred from Satan to God, and finally he was forgiven of sins and welcomed into God's loving embrace.

Later in II Corinthians 4:6, Paul writes, “For it is God who said, ‘Let lights shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of knowledge in the glory of God and in the face of Christ.” In his writing, Peter speaks of “God calling us out of darkness into marvelous light.” (I Peter 2:9)

In death, God lights our way. We speak of moving toward the light as we enter eternal life. At the commendation in our memorial services we say, “Receive your servant into everlasting arms, into your company of saints in light.” From creation to birth; from birth to turning our lives around; from turning our lives around to death; from death to eternity – God Lights Our Way.

How does God light your way? Are there times in your life when you have been in the pit of despair or struggling to find the energy to stand and move, either physically or spiritually? Have you found yourself questioning everything about decisions you have made, or how you have arrived at the place where you are? Do you find that you have become negative to the extent that it creates darkness around you? Do you feel as though your life is cast in darkness?

It is at times such as this it is crucial to read God’s word. Start with the Psalms of David. You will find that these songs of praise and lament, songs of worship and delight focus you on the way of God – a way out of the darkness and into the light. Read the Gospel of John. John opens with, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God!” He proclaims that although darkness has entered the world, the light will overcome the darkness. Pray at times such as this. Be still. Open your hands. Open your eyes. In your prayer life, you may need to “fake it till you make it.” Nevertheless,

take time to pray in the dark night of your soul.

Recently, I sat and studied the Marblehead Lighthouse. It is the longest continuously-active lighthouse on the Great Lakes. It is not tall. It is rather plain. I do not find it a particularly attractive or interesting lighthouse. It doesn't have a large light within its tower. Its little light is magnified by the prisms of glass at the top of the lighthouse that light in darkness for miles and miles away. The light it sends gives comfort and direction to the sailor – “steer clear of these rocks,” it cries.

That day, a young couple was being married on the rocks below the lighthouse. Benches are placed around the lighthouse dedicated to other couples who were married 50 and 60 years, who came to that place to renew love, to be at peace, to receive light. People are drawn to the lighthouse because they know in their heart of hearts, she has saved many lives as a silent sentinel. Her abiding presence and constancy of light and hope draws others to her.

In many ways, God's word is like the Marblehead Lighthouse. No matter how you package it, or translate it, it is not sexy or particularly attractive. But it is solid and constant and dependable. If you walk into Borders or Barnes and Noble, it doesn't stand out in any way, although it has been a #1 top seller for close to 2,000 years!

The narrative, poetry and history of God's word is well-written but not bright all by itself. Its prism is God. God takes the people in God's narrative and shines light on them, in them and through them to others. So people through the ages are drawn to God's Word. Like a silent sentinel, God's

word is a powerful and healing light. When people turn to God's word, crashes and collisions into the rocks of life, have been averted. And most powerfully, the light of God's word will shine on us forever. We can depend on this.

In the darkest night of our lives, in the midst of the most tumultuous challenges we face, God Lights Our Way. And that, my friends, is very good news. Amen.