

In our day and age, particularly in developed countries like Canada, I think we really take light for granted. I would wager that every day, each of us turns on at least one light, if not more: whether that's the head lamps on your car to light your way, a light by your bedside when you want to read at night, a night light for those who have trouble sleeping or even here in this sanctuary so that we can read our prayerbooks, sing our songs and so on. Even if you haven't turned on a light yourself, you've probably benefited from electric light in some way today. Even in the midst of winter, here in Canada where it's dark when you wake up and dark almost before the work day is over, we don't fully appreciate how important light is in our lives. Light is so readily available to us, it is such a part of our daily existence that I'd wager most of us don't appreciate how important it is.

For people living before the advent of electricity light was a precious commodity, particularly in the northern hemisphere where the length of the day fluctuates the further north you are. In pre-modern times very few activities could be accomplished at night, and only the rich would have afforded candles and lamps to bring some light into the darkness. Life was lived in the light, fields were tended, relationships were tended to, craftsman worked, the light of the Sun was essential. Darkness was dangerous, darkness meant you couldn't see, meant you weren't safe.

Because we take light for granted we can often miss how important the imagery of light is in the Bible, or at the very least not understand why the Biblical writers used the imagery so frequently. But the imagery of light is important, the Bible begins and ends with it after all. The first words we hear God utter into the chaos and darkness of Creation are "Let there be light!" in Genesis 1:3, and in Revelation 21 the Biblical narrative comes to a close with a vision of the New Jerusalem, a city of perpetual light, with God as its light source, Jesus as the lamp of God. The whole story of God that we read in the Bible is bookended with light shining in the darkness, with the warm divine light of God washing over all of Creation, and God looking upon it and declaring that it is Good. Not only does the Bible begin and end with visions of divine light, but throughout we see the theme of light recurring. In Exodus, God manifests himself to the Israelites as a pillar of cloud and fire, to light their way. Moses face shines with divine light, after conferencing with God on Mount Sinai. Israel is called to be a light to the nations. The prophets continually declare that God will shine his light into the darkness, continue to declare the power of the divine light to bring life in the darkness. As we move from the Old Testament to the New, the promise of divine light comes to rest upon Jesus, as the Gospel writers see Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophets' promises of light coming into the world.

Although we can mentally or logically understand this as we read the Bible, it can often be hard to believe, it can often be hard to see how Jesus is God's light breaking into the world, especially in a world where we see so much darkness; in a world where ISIS is killing innocent Iraqi and Syrian children; in a world where our loved ones are diagnosed with cancer; in a world where native women in Canada are disappearing and no one seems to care. In this world it can be bewildering to see the divine light of God.

While the disciples of Jesus day had the benefit of following Jesus in the flesh, a benefit we are often jealous of, they too were often as bewildered at Jesus' identity, they too were often overcome by a sense that God's light was absent. In our gospel reading today, we have a perfect example of this. As Peter, James and John witness Jesus' transfiguration upon the mountain top, they are struck with fear, they are bewildered to the point of being struck dumbfounded. In story of Jesus' transfiguration we see the divine light of God shining forth from Jesus, and disciples

don't know what to make of it. Even when Peter does get up the courage to speak, he completely misses the boat. To the disciples who walked with Jesus, the transfiguration was incomprehensible in the moment, so it should come as no surprise that hearing about it today can leave us puzzled or downright confused. It is interesting to note that Jesus offers the disciples no explanation, instead he orders them to tell no one, he commands them to be silent until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Jesus commands the disciples to be silent because the divine light of God breaking into the world is incomprehensible, it is something that boggles the mind. The divine light of God, the light which shined forth into the darkness at Creation and shined forth from Jesus at the Transfiguration, is incomprehensible without Jesus' death and resurrection. It is only at the Cross, at Jesus death, when the sky goes dark, when it seems that the light of God has been extinguished, that we see the totality of God's love for us, that we see the lengths that God will go to, to reconcile the world to him, the lengths that God will go to defeat the power of sin and darkness. It is at the Crucifixion, at the very point where it appears that God's light is totally absent, that God's promise to fill the world with his divine creative light is fulfilled. Jesus takes all the darkness on himself so that darkness has no ultimate power in this world and then in his resurrection he shines once more with the light of the transfiguration, he shines once more with the pure, warm and everlasting light of new creation.

The transfiguration is not some event that teaches us a new moral teaching, it doesn't even call us to seek transfiguration in our own lives, but rather it tells us who Jesus is, it tells us that the one we follow, the one we read about in the Scriptures is none other than the Son of God, none other than the Creator of Universe. The transfiguration teaches us that God promises to fill our lives with his divine creative light, it teaches us that God's intention for our lives is to bask in that light, to live in the light and glory of God's presence. At times this will be bewildering, at times it will be hard to see God's light in our lives, because we will be focusing too much on the darkness around us. Sometimes, perhaps more often than not, we will be like the disciples who are awed and terrified by God's glory in our lives. But God promises that as you follow Jesus, as you take up your own Cross and follow him, your life will be filled more and more with this divine light, that you and your fellow followers of Christ will experience the joy, peace and love of God more and more. My prayer for us all as we enter the season of Lent, as we enter this season of preparation for Easter, is: that we might come to know the light of God's presence in our lives more and more; that we might come to see God's creative light even in the darkest places of our world and in our lives.

Lord,

Free us from the dark night of death.

Let the light of resurrection

Dawn within our hearts

To bring us to the radiance of eternal life.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

One God, for ever and ever. AMEN.