

Sermon
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Light

There is no sun nor stars just God's breath blowing across the dark chaos.
And then God called forth LET THERE BE LIGHT

Light in the Hebrew Bible can represent the Shekinah, the Shimmering of God.
The visible aspect of the invisible God. its presence makes God's presence and dwelling place known.
Let there be light. Perhaps God was creating her own home. All of the creatures part of her household.
Everything was created in the presence of Light.

John's Gospel continues the theme of light and creation.
Word came into the world, and made its home among us.
The word was God and was light that darkness cannot extinguish.
Jesus is the shimmering of God. The visible presence of the invisible God.

it is a beautiful picture, shining and majestic.
But the story of light and creation continues in an unexpected way when
Jesus tells us that we are the light.
Light of the world and light for the world.
We are called to participate in the shimmering of God.
To be light that cannot be extinguished.

And you know what? it is true that we are light.
Literally, scientifically true.

Let me tell you how you are light in two ways.
The first is the way you burn like a candle flame
The second is how you radiate light.

First, combustion

- You know how when you light the wick of a candle the first thing that happens is that the wax begins to melt and make a puddle of liquid wax at the base of the wick.
That liquid wax moves up the wick like water does a paper towel you dip in a basin. Soon the entire paper towel is wet even though only a corner is actually in the water. The same thing with the wick. The wax at the base moves up the wick to the base of the flame.

- When it touches the flame, that blue part in the center called plasma, it is so hot that the atoms of the wax are broken. The Hydro-Carbons are separated into Hydrogen and carbon nuclei.

That's as hard as the science gets. Hydro-Carbon breaks into hydrogen and carbon.

- As more wax molecules move up the wick, the ones in the blue portion of the flame are pushed from the center and contact the air around the flame. That's the orange part of the candle flame called the combustion zone. Here the Hydrogen and Carbon mix with the Oxygen in the air and become Carbon Dioxide and Hydrogen Oxide – water,
- In the process the flame releases energy in the form of heat.

- Now the fun part. The very same chemical process that happens in the candle flame happens in every one of your living cells.
- You eat Carbo-Hydrates. Your blood stream brings them to your cells. To the Mitochondria of your cells.
- There the carbo-hydrates are broken into carbon and hydrogen and energy is released into your body.
- Your blood brings the left over carbon and hydrogen to your lungs where they mix with oxygen and you exhale carbon dioxide and water. Combustion = respiration

Everyone one of your living cells burns like the candles on the altar.

You are a light for the world.

There is another way that you are light – Radiance.

- Here an example helps. We know that we can see the Moon because light from the Sun shines on it and bounces into our eyes. That's certainly true, but there is more to it than that.
- The Sun shines on the Moon. Some of the light bounces and reaches our eyes. Some of the light is absorbed into the surface of the Moon. When that happens, little particles of light, called photons, hit the atoms on the Moon and dissolve into it. The atoms respond by jumping an energy level and emitting a photon.
- This is not the same photon that hit the Moon. That one is gone, dissolved.
- The amazing thing is that the Moon herself creates a photon and releases it. This is not the same photon caught in a cage and escapes. It is a particle of light created by the Moon herself.
- When you stand in Moon light, some of it is reflected sunlight, but most of it is Moon light.

Now here's the fun part.

This property of absorbing and creating light – Radiance- is not unique to the Moon. It is a property of matter itself. All matter is made of atoms and all atoms absorb and create photons.

That includes each of you.

- Look at Sammy. The light from the windows hits her face, hair, clothes. Some of the light bounces back to us and we see it.
- Some of the light melts into her and she responds by emitting light that she makes.

- Some of the light then hits Judy who responds by emitting her light of her own.
- We are all receiving and emitting light constantly.
- We live in a bath of light and we bath others with ours.
- One large shimmering cloud of light in spite of any darkness or chaos.
- Even in a room with no light. Atoms emit light. Until we find the point of absolute zero, the theoretical temperature when all atomic activity ceases, the shimmering continues.
- Even the dark is not dark to God.
- You are a pillar of light and that is not a metaphor.

Both combustion and radiance are properties of all matter.

- That means that it is not just the Christians who shine or even the humans
- But everything living breaths light with its respiration (even plants have some cells that respirator)
- All the plants and animals in this garden burn with the same flame as you.
- Even the stones and benches, the altar and the walls, emit at light they created.
- We are awash in light that calls and causes us to be light.
- All the Earth participates in the shimmering of God.

Then what is important about us?

- Those of us who are Christians have been baptized in the light of Christ.
- We ourselves or our parents for us dedicated us to walk in the light of Christ.
- Those of us who are married, or ordained, or professed religious vows or have devoted themselves to a vocation have also dedicated ourselves to use our light for a particular service. To unique ways of living our light for the service of the Good.
- At the end of the baptismal ritual at least in the Catholic church, the newly baptized hears a prayer like this one.

This light is entrusted to you
to be kept burning brightly.
You have been enlightened by Christ.
You are to walk always
as a child of the light.
May you keep the flame of faith
alive in your heart.
When the Lord comes,
may you go out to meet him
with all the saints
in the heavenly kingdom.

- You know what usually happens next? The newly baptized and her family are told to blow out the candle and sit down.
- Keep the fire burning forever, now blow it out?
- What a wonder it is the the light that we are can never be blown out.
- We can ignore it and forget it, but God is always faithful.
- Our light our shimmering continues always.
- You are the light of the World.
A light that cannot be blown out
A light that darkness cannot overcome.

But what happens when we do forget that we, and everything around us, are bathed in light in light are children of Light?

- St Dominic, the founder of the Dominican Order or Preachers, was asked that question once
- He sent his friars out two by two into the country side and distant cities to study and preach in a time when most religious were confined to monasteries.
- A concerned patron asked him if he was afraid that some of the handsome young men might return a bit “dusty.”
- He simply responded not to worry. If they got dusty, they would be dusted off when they returned.
- Like those early friars we came get dusty.
- When we do, our shimmering dulls

How do we get it back? How do we dust off and polish ourselves up?

- The reading from Romans provides a clue.
- “For what can be known about God is plain to them,
 - because God has shown it to them.
 - Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature,
 - invisible though they are,
 - have been understood and seen through the things he has made.”
- We can know God through the things God has made.
- God is clearly seen in creation. The Invisible shimmering is always there
- many of us have forgotten how to see the shimmering
- In that forgetting, we came to believe, or at least act like, that the world was soulless
- We as individuals, communities, and cultures are often in need of reconciliation
- with each other and with the divine shine all around us.
- How do we dust off?
- One way is to let the light around us shine on us
- Be open to the light from the people around us and the creatures around us.

- Re-member that we are children of light, and always will be.
- Go outside or look through the windows. See the Shimmering and know that we are part of it

So let your light shine

- Participate in the shimmering of God
- When you get dusty or distracted go outside, ask and allow creation, perhaps a favorite place, plant, rock formation, sky, candle flame to reconcile you.
- To blow away the dust or chaos
- and help you shimmer with your whole self
- on the path to which you have been called
- for your sake and the sake of the WHOLE
- LET THERE BE LIGHT