

We're still in the Epiphany season, everyone! This is still the Season of Light which follows Christmas. It began with the star guiding the Wise Men to the humble lodging of the newborn Jesus. And it will end next Sunday, February 14th with the Gospel passage we call the Transfiguration.

So, on this, the next to the last Sunday of the Epiphany season I want to talk about light and service. "Lift up your eyes and see" says Isaiah. What does Isaiah want us to look at? "Lift up your eyes," he says. So, I guess not the ground below us? Although, to be sure, we have to be very careful this time of year that we pay attention to ice patches on the ground! Otherwise we could be in a heap of trouble. But, when it's safe, lift up your eyes and look at the way God's powerful brightness illuminates the world and everything that is in it.

Isaiah continues, "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless." God's sovereign power is too much for me to understand!

Talking about light helps. We depend on sunlight during the day, we couldn't live without it. Isaiah says that God stretches out the heavens like a curtain." Well, we know, because of scientific discovery, that the world is not flat (with ends on one side and another.) and the sky is not a curtain with the sun, the moon and the stars and planets all placed on a flat dome above us. Our words and knowledge have increased many times over through the centuries, but mysteries still remain. We can't explain it all.

But we can understand a metaphor for God's power. How about thinking of the lights that we use to light up our world when the sun has set. What power it takes to light up a stadium at night to be as bright at the day. But, just because we have learned to harness the power of coal, sun, wind and water so that we can see the big football game at night doesn't mean that we are smarter or more powerful than ancient people who walked the earth before us.

They set their minds on harnessing the power of the earth of their day. And yet, the power of God created everything that is, and sustains our life in this world through the power of the Spirit. Our ability to light up the landscape can always fall prey to a technical problem or a natural event. We may have learned a lot, but we aren't infallible and neither are our power generation systems.

We heard a couple of weeks ago from psalm 139: ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you [God]; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. (Ps. 139:12)

In our scene from Mark's Gospel today we have a picture of a life in the day of Jesus. At the beginning of our passage Jesus is at work in the daylight. He and the disciples have been and the synagogue where Jesus was proclaiming the Good News to all who were there. And then they make their way to the house of his disciples Andrew and Simon Peter.

Jesus heals their mother as his service to others continues. And this allows her, unnamed as she is, to regain her strength and continue her life of service. As the light fades the household finishes their meal that she had prepared, and then we are told that after sundown many others come to the house for healing. The world settles in for the night but for Jesus, the Light of God, he still serves the people with this words and his healing touch. The dark is not dark to him.

The rest of us in the same circumstance would tell the people to come back during the next day. But Jesus serves others into the night. We aren't told if or when Jesus slept. We are taken to the next morning, very early when it was still dark. Jesus has left the house to find a quiet deserted place to rest and to pray. There must be a time in the day when even Jesus needs to allow God to refresh him. The time apart gives Jesus the peace and silence needed to be with God and with himself. A human body must have rest. But his disciples couldn't even wait for Jesus to return when the sun was rising. They went out to find him.

People were already gathering in the dawning day ready for Jesus to come back and heal them too. Daylight returns in the last scene of our story and we are told that Jesus went throughout Galilee in just this same way, proclaiming the message and healing the sick. This sets the pattern for the days and nights of Jesus; a life of service and preaching in the day, and in the night.

The most wonderful thing about this passage from the Gospel of Mark is that we see in it a pattern for our lives of faith. Just as Jesus taught the disciples, we too listen and become disciples.

And then, following him, we are to reach out our hands to others to help where we are able. We, like Jesus, take time apart to pray, to recover and rest while our energies are restored by God. And then, being motivated and blessed by God's Word, we are drawn back to the world of our communities, and we're ready to get to work again in whatever way we are able. To do the tasks that are set before us.

Our job has been, and will be, to reflect the light of God, reflect the service of Jesus.