

“Power up your flashlight” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
March 26, 2017 Fourth Sunday in Lent
Ephesians 5: 8-14

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Light and darkness. Good and bad. Darkness: things that go bump in the night, the monster under the bed. Are you comfortable with darkness or would you rather be living in the light?

I was never a kid who was afraid of the darkness, though I’ve known people who were fearful of darkness. Some worry about the monster under the bed or perhaps have fearful memories of something that happened to them in the dark – afraid it may happen again.

I’ve always been concerned about the difficulty of finding my way in the dark. Our family camped a lot when I was a kid and campgrounds were not quite as deluxe as most are now. There were no security lights on tall poles lighting up the night. If it was a moonless night, I really needed a flashlight to find my way to the privy in the darkness. Thank God for flashlights.

Perhaps a flashlight just might be a way to think about light in these verses. The scripture says that God has filled us with light – sort of like having a flashlight inside of us. God has provided you and me with a flashlight to find our way. No more tripping in the darkness or fear of the dark. We can see our way with Christ as our flashlight.

Yes, we can see our way with Christ as our flashlight, but we also are to use our light so everyone can see what’s going on. We certainly don’t want our friends to trip over some obstacle in the darkness, do we? We can help them to find their way to Christ, so they can be a light for others.

Ok, enough metaphors, let’s get down to the basics. How are we to be filled with light, so we can be Christ’s flashlight? By accepting Jesus into our life and then by living and loving and serving as Christ did. We can be filled with light by having faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior and trusting in Jesus that he will help us figure out what we need to do to please God. As today’s scripture say, we can be filled with light by doing **things that are good and right and true**. When we do these things then we have Christ as our flashlight in our lives.

What does it mean **to shine the light into the dark so everyone can see what’s going on?**

That sounds like we need to help others see in the dark. That’s right and that’s where our flashlight comes in handy. We can help people find their way to faith in Jesus Christ, so they have Christ in their lives as their flashlight. By setting the example, showing them the way, by telling them about Jesus, we can bring them out of darkness and into the light.

There’s another way to look at this idea of shining our **light into the dark so everyone can see what’s going on**. We can use our flashlights to shine on the dark things of this world; to point out those things that may not be God-honoring. What does that mean? We can use our flashlight to show or point out poverty, discrimination of any type, illegal business practices, problems in our families that need to be talked out, things you and I may be doing that are not God-honoring. We can use that light so everyone can see what’s going on. That can be pretty scary at times to do so, but many people before us have done so.

Who can you name that has done just that? Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mother Theresa are but two examples of people who have used their flashlight to point out problems in our world. And, this is the important part, they not only identified the problem, the darkness, but also worked to address those problems.

Let's make these examples more personal. Who do you know that has found issues in our community, our church, or your family and then worked to address them? You don't need to name that person aloud. It may be members of this congregation who provide food for the poor or work for equality for gays or it may be a member of your family who keeps the peace between opposing factions in your family.

You don't have to be a Martin Luther King, Jr. or a Mother Theresa to use your flashlight to shine on the problems of this world and then to do something to deal with the problem, to make the problem better or to take away the problem.

For all of you here today – kids and adults – what is it that enabled Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mother Theresa to do what they did? Was it their own personal power that they were able to change the world? For those who feed the poor in our world or work for equality for all – do they accomplish what they are doing by their own energy and will?

This may be difficult to grasp for some of us, but the energy, the power to shine your light and work to address problems in our world, our communities and our families doesn't come from us. It come from Jesus, from God. We are God's flashlight. The power to shine comes from God. The scripture today says we are filled with light because of God. We don't generate our own electricity to make the flashlight shine. God give us spiritual energy to deal with those issues we see that need our attention.

We simply need to tap into that energy. And that's one important aspect of having faith: depending on Jesus for our energy. If you are wondering about how to do that. I suggest you pray to God for direction and for the spiritual energy to act. There's no formula for tapping into that energy that God provides. I can't tell you to do x, y and then z and then you'll be energized. Today's scripture says we need to do some work ourselves to figure out what pleases God. That's where prayer and discernment and experimentation take place.

This direction and spiritual energy is needed not only by each of us, but also by this church. Our church has completed the small group part of the New Beginnings process. We are now entering the discernment process – trying to figure out from all your input in the small groups where God is leading us - where we, as a church, need to be shining our flashlight. Where we need to be using our God-given spiritual energy to address issues in this community. Our next steps are to figure out for ourselves what pleases God. As we enter this process, I ask for your prayers and your help as we discern what is pleasing to God. We will need everyone's help to find our way as we plan for the future. So, let's all tap into God's spiritual power and then power up those flashlights. Let's work together to light the way for our church.