

Let The Lower Lights be Burning

Good morning friends.

So, this is the view from the Pulpit!

The more observant ones among you will notice that I am not one of our visiting Pastors, although we do have a nice schedule to take us up though an Interim Pastor.

My job in securing an Interim Pastor is to “bridge the gap”

The gap between Pastor Natalie leaving and the new Interim Pastor taking over. We use a list of “available” Pastors and try to confirm a Pastor for every open week.

So, we still have a few weeks to bridge as the Interim Search team continue their work, but we could not secure a Pastor for today. So today I will attempt to bridge that gap.

When I was thinking and praying about what I could talk about today it became very clear to me. There is a part of our Worship service that links to a favorite scripture, a favorite hymn, and to my past.

Matthew, the author of our Church Mission statement “to love God and Neighbor”, also said in 5:14-16:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Here Jesus compares his disciples to **light**. He calls them the "**light of the world,**" in fact, **light** was a crucial symbol in the Jewish worldview.

In the same way, **the light of Christ** is not meant to be hidden on the earth. It is meant to **shine out brightly from all who belong to Christ**. It is meant to be discovered by those still in the darkness. Jesus will add to this point in the following verse that Christ's light should not be covered up in the lives of His followers. It is meant to be seen.

John also speaks a lot about the Light of Christ

In Chapter 12: verse 35-36 he says

So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.

So, the presence of the Light is seen in the phrases, **the Light is among you** and **you have the Light**.

John goes on to say:

While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light. These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

So its not enough that we see the light but we must **believe in the light**, and then **become sons of light**. We must find ways to reflect the Light of Christ in everything we do.

And Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

I loved Mark's readings about fishermen.

My Dad was a fisherman, a trawler skipper. He would leave for two weeks come home for three days then leave again. His trawler was about 120 feet long with 12 men in the crew and his job as skipper (or captain) was to navigate to the fishing grounds, find the fish and of course navigate back home to the safety of the harbor. He would fish in the North Sea, around Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Mainly in search of cod.

He was, as you can imagine at sea during some terrible storms. During those times we were always grateful for the **lighthouse**, that was situated on what we called "the headland". A high point of land overlooking the harbor that cast a light across the waves as the ships, came home.

We lived only two blocks from the ocean and so when he was heading home, we could go the sea wall and watch for him.

I remember how exciting it was to watch the fishing boats come home. You could tell if they had a good catch based

in how low in the water the boat was. No matter the catch the boat was always surrounded by hungry squawking sea gulls looking for a meal, as the boat made its way to the safe harbor, protected by the **lighthouse**.

Most of us have seen a lighthouse. We know that they provide a visible indication of hazardous rocks, or even a safe passage through those rocks.

In some harbors the safe passage into the harbor is very narrow and the ship must negotiate a deep channel between the rocks. In this case we need two lighthouses.

A tall one with a smaller one in front? The smaller one is called the lower light and when a ship maneuvers to line up both lights they mark a straight line, through the rocks to a safe harbor.

In small villages that cannot afford two lighthouses the homes closest to the ocean switch on all of their lights to show the rocks and shine a reflected passage to safety. When a ship is entering that harbor in a storm the call goes out to “light the lower lights”.

Our home town did not have a “lower light house” and the safe channel was fairly well marked but there was a tradition for residents of the homes built on the sea wall to put their lights on when vessels entered the harbor at night or in a storm.

Dwight L. Moody, was one of the greatest evangelists of the 19th century. At one of his meetings, he related the story of a shipwreck on a dark and tempestuous night, when not even a star was visible. A ship was approaching the harbor of Cleveland Ohio, with a pilot on board. The captain, noticing only one light as they drew near, asked the pilot if he was quite sure that it was Cleveland harbor, as other lights should have been burning at the harbor mouth. (the homes by the shore) The pilot replied that he was quite sure, whereupon the captain enquired:

“Where are the lower lights?”

“Gone out, sir,” replied the pilot.

“Can you make the harbor, then?” asked the captain, to which the pilot answered:

“We must, sir, or we perish.”

Bravely the pilot steered the vessel upon her course toward safety. But alas! In the darkness of the harbor mouth he missed the channel, the ship struck upon many rocks, and in the stormy waters many lives were lost.

Then Moody made his appeal to his audience: “Brothers and Sisters, the Master will take care of the great lighthouse! Let us keep the lower lights burning!”

Among Moody’s audience that evening was Mr. Philip P. Bliss, the well-known hymn writer, and the striking story at once suggested to him, what was to become, one of his most popular hymns:

Let The Lower Lights be Burning.

The words say:

Brightly beams our Father's mercy

From His lighthouse evermore,

But to us He gives the keeping

Of the lights along the shore.

Let the lower lights be burning!

Send a gleam across the wave!

Some poor lost and struggling seaman

You may rescue, you may save.

So, if God can keep the main lighthouse burning showing the safe and restful eternal place, then it is up to us to be the lower lights. To provide the path to the eternal Father. To show a safe passage to Faith. To help guide those who have lost their way, find peace in Christ.

To provide a safe passage home for those that been walking in darkness.

So how can you be a lower light?

Back in the day if you lived by the ocean, it meant switching your lights on, or lighting a beacon on the beach. Anything to cast light on the dangerous rocks that threatened to sink the ship that was sailing towards the higher light, the lighthouse.

Today however, in faith, we know that the lighthouse is God and the lower lights are our efforts to guide people, who have lost their way, safely to him. We worry that during this past Covid year many have lost their way. Some have found other Churches, some have not. Some have just sunk into the routine of not coming to Worship. Others believe that 3 million people passing is cause to lose faith.

Today we seem to have lost our way. We seem to be more interested in winning, or scoring points, at the expense of someone else, or engaging in the latest activity of Cancel Culture.

These are all opportunities for us to be a lower light.

Here at First Presbyterian Church of Owasso, we bring in the light of Christ at every Worship Service. To end Worship, we then “Take out the light of Christ into the World”.

We are charged to take out the light of Christ, but to do what?

There are many ways we can do that, such as:

- Living a good Christian life.
- Loving God and Neighbor.
- Demonstrating Christian values.

But what if there was more?

What if we could use that light of Christ as a “lower light”.

What if we could help guide those who have lost their way, to find peace in Christ? To find their way back to God.

So today, at the end of Worship, when the Acolyte (name) takes out the light of Christ, as she passes you, welcome that light into your heart. Let that light burn inside of you so that you may be a lower light.

Jesus is the light, but we friends are the lower lights. We have been charged to take the light of Christ out into the World. Let's use that light to bring light to others that may be surrounded by darkness.

And to that all God's people said.....Amen.