

Sermon for Feb. 14, 2021 by Pastor Hanberry, What I Learned from the Dark (ser21-7) 2 Corin 4.3-6 & Mark 9,1-9

This idea that God, in Jesus Christ, brings healing light and hope to a hurting world is so fundamentally true that it seems to me that we ought not to have to be working so hard to reinforce it. But alas, we do need to do this today. If we just take the time to look around us, to look into the faces of the people we encounter each day, we see evidence of God's love expressed in their lives; in our own lives. Indeed, this is one of the ways that God lights up the darkness. God lights up our world through the people we meet and greet and encounter each day. --- **reflections on the eye graphic...**

What do we read in the 5th and 6th verses of our epistle lesson today from 2 Corinthians? **[5] "Remember, our Message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. [6] It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful."** As we see and understand God, as we look in to the face of Christ, we also see the face of Christ in those who come before our eyes and lives each day. That is the very best expression of the incarnation I can offer you, the best expression of God's love for us.

The message of God's love is not about ourselves, it is about God; it's about our neighbor, in whose face we see reflected IN the love and sorrow of a loving God. If we listen to those who come into our lives, if we really listen, we will hear God speaking, we will sense God trying to bring us into relationship – into something called the kingdom of God. – the reign of God in the world.

Brian McLaren, a former pastor of the Cedar Ridge Community Church (Spencerville, MD), and a prolific writer about the emerging church movement – wrote a book titled: *A Generous Orthodoxy*, with sub-title: ***Why I am a missional, evangelical, post/protestant, liberal/conservative,***

mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/calvinist, anabaptist/anglican, methodist, catholic, green, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, unfinished Christian, poses this intriguing question: "If Jesus were here today, what language would he use to tell us what God is saying to us? What metaphors would he use?" Would Jesus talk about the kingdom of God coming into the world? Brian says this in answer to his own question: ***"It's a very practical question for people like me who believe that the message of Jesus has radical transformational potential today—and who feel called to try to communicate it. Of course, we'll always need to go back to Jesus' original words and story, seeking to understand how kingdom language worked in his own day. But then we must discover fresh ways of translating his message into the thought forms and cultures of our contemporary world, if we are to 'teach what Jesus taught in the manner he taught it.'"***

Then he says, ***"The search for the best translation is an artistic pursuit as well as a theological one. It involves not just a deep understanding of Jesus' message, but also a substantial understanding of our contemporary culture and its many currents and crosscurrents. Whatever metaphors we choose will likely have a limited shelf life, and each will be open to various misunderstandings—just as Jesus' own metaphors were."***

So, we SEE God's light breaking thru the darkness through the people God sends to us. That, my friends, is one of God's most important jobs: Bringing us together with others. Now, don't misunderstand me: I am not suggesting that every single person we meet speaks for God. Some speak out of their judgmental attitudes, their prejudices, their resentments. Well, listen to them too that you might be the voice of a grace-filled God for their lives.

Did you hear the message in 2 Corinthians?

It **started** when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful. The use of the word "started" suggests to me that God still speaks in words of love and light.

I also think that we can listen for God's still speaking voice in the extraordinary events of our lives and of the world in which we live. One such extraordinary event would have been what happened to Peter, James and John in our gospel lesson today....the event we normally call the transfiguration of Jesus. [3] **"His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them. [4] Elijah, along with Moses, came into view, in deep conversation with Jesus. [5] Peter interrupted, "Rabbi, this is a great moment! Let's build three memorials—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah." [6] He blurted this out without thinking, stunned as they all were by what they were seeing.[7] Just then a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and from deep in the cloud, a voice: "This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him." 8] The next minute the disciples were looking around, rubbing their eyes..."**

When was the last time you went away from some wonderful event or image "rubbing your eyes" and wondering what God is saying to you in that experience? Or we might wonder about the last time you woke from some troubling dark night of the soul when the fear that God was no where to be found led you to a pleading prayer of comfort and presence.

We live in both of these places in our lives...and hopefully, we learn from them: learn from the dazzling light show that illumines and brightens our sense of ourselves and of God; and we learn from the dark the non-anxious presence of the unseen God of the dark places of our lives. May you learn from both. Amen.