

January 8, 2012

SCRIPTURE: Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 60: 1-6
Epistle: Ephesians 3: 1-12
Gospel Matthew 2: 1-12

MEDITATION: Turn On The Light!

”See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples”.

That is no surprise for us. We just have to turn on the news or read a newspaper and we KNOW that darkness covers the earth. There is so much trouble in so many places, both in the big wide world and in our own smaller personal worlds that we are moved not to hope but often to despair. We often want to cry out to God, or to anyone or anything that might hear us:

TURN ON THE LIGHT!

And God said: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.

FEEEEWWWW Thank heaven. The light has come. When we have been in darkness, there is something marvelous about walking into the light.

This last holiday season while I was in Victoria, one of my daily chores was to walk my “grandpuppy”. Since my children can’t hear me this morning, I can safely tell you that this is one SPOILED puppy!! His name is Atticus Finch, which I think says more about the personality of his pet parents than of his own. He doesn’t listen very well and he is prone to running off into the wooded areas of the walk, and completely ignoring a person’s call to come back. And when he does come back it is with a kind of definite attitude that just seems totally surprised that you might be annoyed with him!

It winter time and rainy at the coast, and one night it was pouring buckets and I decided to just take him around the block. My kids live in a semi rural area and what I didn’t realize was that there were no street lights, and no “around the block” possibility in this meaning neighborhood. It was pitch black and pouring rain as I tried to make my way back to the house. Atticus is black in colour so it was doubly hard to even see him in the darkness. When we finally came around a corner at an intersection, there was one lone street light and I felt such a surge of thankfulness that I could finally see and attach Atticus’ leash to his color.

It is so true that when we come out of any kind of darkness that there is a great sigh of relief when that darkness is lifted, even if just a little and we can once again SEE.

Atticus is a very privileged little dog. He has no human siblings, so he is the centre of attention in his home. He even has his own toy box which is overflowing with all manner of fun things. And at Christmas time, we were all dully informed that there MUST be gifts under the tree for him. It is laughable of course but in some way it is also a little sad. I couldn't help but think of how his little life is so full of love and attention while there are so many children in our world whose lives are drastically different. Atticus' life is full and happy because humans love and adore him and I found myself thinking how sad it is that that is not the reality for human children in so many places.

TURN ON THE LIGHT. Who will do that for the many children that need us to do that? God has given us the gift of light in Jesus and we are surely called to use that gift to turn on the light for those who are in need.

Today we have had the great joy of baptizing these three little persons into the Christian community. These little ones are blessed just like Atticus. They are surrounded with adults and other children who love and adore them and who are determined to give them all that is necessary in life so that their lives will be secure and happy. That is as it should be. And these three little children bring such joy and pleasure as all children should. Yesterday when we met together, we adults had a great time as we watched Wilson and Reid become aware of each other and how they reached out to touch each other and make a baby connection. We laughed to as Allie, howled in protest because we had moved into her lunch time. It was fun, but again I couldn't help but think of those children in our world who howl all they can but no lunch comes. Who will bring the light into the presence of children who are hurting? I believe God is speaking to us and saying

TURN ON THE LIGHT. I have given you the greatest gift of all in the life and death of Jesus, now use that gift in your life and lift the darkness wherever you might find it.

We will do that in one small way today as we gather and open the gifts we have brought for the Crises Nursery. We are working to provide some comfort and some necessary things for children who often arrive at the nursery with only what they are wearing. Some crises or catastrophe has distributed their little lives and we hope to make that just a little easier for them.

The people of the exile were looking for a light. In spite of the promises that had been made to them about the restoration of Israel upon their return from exile, their vision did not turn out to be the reality for which they had hope. It probably wasn't as bad as the wilderness wanderings of Moses' time, and it certainly had to be better than slavery under the Egyptians or Assyrians or Babylonian. But it surely was no land flowing with milk and honey. It was a land of too many foreigners, too much work, and too many disappointments. They were looking for any kind of light. And God sent that light. God sent the light to the people of Israel and to all people. Nations will come to the light. Kings will be drawn to the dawn of light in Israel. Isaiah goes on to say that the riches of the world will follow the kings – ships full of goods, camels, gold, incense, and silver. Is God telling us that if we TURN ON THE LIGHT, there will be enough riches for all?

On Epiphany we recognize the visit of the Magi bringing gifts to the boy Jesus. Although we put this story close to the story of the birth of Jesus, the bible is pretty clear that it happened sometime after his birth – maybe weeks or months. Were these Magi kings, astrologers, or some other world travelers? They were from the Far East, perhaps Persia or Arabia, or both. It is likely that they represented the privileged of society, illustrative by their ability to travel, by their ability to command an audience with King Herod, and by the gifts that they offer to the child. Have you noticed that the gifts they brought, gold, frankincense and myrrh were gifts also used not only at his birth but also at his death?

This last week I read a story in the Observer about the problem of Roma or gypsies who are seeking refugee status here in Canada. The stories of their persecution in their home lands are disturbing but what is even more disturbing is how our government is treating them here in Canada. Fewer than 10% of their claims are ratified and they are deported. I know first hand some of what they experience. When I have visited my son in Italy I have seen the prejudice and discrimination that they live under. Italy is maybe not as oppressive as some of the eastern European countries but it is no picnic. My daughter – in-law has told me stories of how when she was a child and misbehaving that the punishment included a threat to be “given away to the Gypsies”. What kind of lesson in equality is that to a young child’s mind?

TURN ON THE LIGHT. If we are not the ones to strive for equality and valuing of all humans as equal then who will. I must admit I sent off a rather scathing criticism to Minister Jason Kenney, criticizing him for his arrogance and superiority that is causing such pain for so many. In my small and probably ineffective way I was trying to turn on a light. A light that speaks of how God wants us to live. A light that acknowledges the light God sent us in Jesus. My letter is just one tiny flickering flame in the face of immense darkness but I dared to light it. What might happen in our world of darkness if we worked together to light these flames everywhere we see the darkness overpowering us. That is indeed God’s direction to us.

TURN ON THE LIGHT. In big ways, in small ways, in acts of love and kindness, in love shared and expressed. Just do it. TURN ON THE LIGHT!

Amen