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St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Thunder Bay, ON

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Matthew 17:1-9 The Light of Love

## The Light of Love

### The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.<sup>1</sup> John 1:1-5.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. This has been a dark week. Heck it just feels like the world is dark right now. Spiritually dark. Emotionally dark. Socially dark. If it were not for the lengthening of each day's sunlight we might be overcome by the darkness physically as well. And granted those who are suffering in their bodies right now probably feel that physical darkness too.

There has been so much strife for so long now. Other countries, other people have known strife, through we know that Canada has its own history of colonization that has caused immeasurable harm. But for the most part, those of us in this moment have had it pretty good. We get to have vehicles, pay the bills, even if the money doesn't feel like it goes very far. We have warm beds and food in the pantry. However, socially, societally, things are so very different. In this time, with our generations, we have seen divisions among friends and family that we would never have imagined prior to the last few years that have included Covid and the widening of political divisions.

And then the unspeakable happens. Something so dark that for Canadians it has stopped our country in its tracks. The Prime Minister halting his travels and announcements because of a tragedy and trauma that has reverberated across not only our country but over the world because these things don't happen in Canada.

Nine lives forever gone, ripped from their families, and two more still in hospital, one little girl still fighting for her life. A community in shock and mourning. A country grieving with them.

The stories are still being told, the harm settling in as darkness, darkness particularly for the families that have empty beds or a place at the table which once streamed with hope and possibility. The mass shooting at a Tumbler Ridge school and a home wounded by the aftermath of death and destruction because of one individual. One so consumed by darkness that harm, the taking of lives, seemed the way to stop the pain

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and anger they had within themselves. We don't get it. We can't understand a pain so deep and anger so vile that it lashes out in the bringing of more darkness, more pain, more harm.

This all in a week where people celebrate love because of Valentine's Day and in the church where we celebrate the light of Christ this Transfiguration Sunday. Love and light.

Darkness and destruction - light and love. How far apart those two things seem to be. Opposite points on the spectrum of our human experience.

This past Friday a vigil was held in Tumbler Ridge. Leaders of our country's political parties, joined with many others from within the community and outside the community to mourn and remember, to tell stories of children and women who had died in such a tragic circumstance, stories of heroinism, stories of fear, bravery, courage, and now light. They stood together, holding each other, holding their candles of light.

We always look for light in the darkness. We light the Christ candle each Sunday as a reminder of the light of Christ. It is a reminder of the light that is for us. We are born with this light in us, most of us can keep that light going even if it is just a flicker at times. Yet, there are those few for whom darkness has so overcome the light that it seems it has been snuffed out. The light was so completely hidden for the one who perpetrated this senseless and horrific act. The light so completely covered over in their soul that it did not appear to have hope of ever shining again. And because of that, the light of the children and two adults who lived among friends, family, and community, were snuffed out.

From the Gospel of John you heard, "In the beginning was the Word... [Jesus]... and the [Jesus] was with God, and [Jesus] was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it."

This week it feels like darkness did overtake the light; however, the light still shines. It is why people held candles at the time of the vigil; it is the remembrance that light still shines in the darkness. What many don't realize is that Christ is the light of the world, the light that can transform and illumine darkness. It does not mean that one does not get help through other humans. Health care professional, medications, therapies, community, this is all part of how Christ's light shines. It is however why Christian community, the love that we have because we know the love and light of Christ, is needed now as much as ever. We are that light of Christ, the light of Christ living and moving and shining through us that can transform the world with the Holy Spirit living and working in, with, and through us.

We are here to love. We are here to bring light to the darkness that threatens to overcome the lives of those we love and lives around the world. God will work in many

ways to bring light through whatever means and people that will step up and be light. I pray that the Christian church is one of the places where people can find light and love. The church is called to be light in the darkness of human experience.

When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and his brother John, they saw Jesus differently. There were not expecting this. They had signed up to follow Jesus but they were not expecting this radiance were Jesus “was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.”<sup>2</sup> They didn’t expect to see the figures of Moses and Elijah in the light and they certainly didn’t expect to have “a bright cloud overshadow them and from the cloud hear a voice say, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”<sup>3</sup> (Matthew 17:1-9)

But once they experienced it they could not unsee it or unhear it. Though we have not seen the transfiguration for ourselves we trust in its truth. Years later Peter would write in his letter,

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.<sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”<sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.<sup>4</sup> (2 Peter 1:16-18)

We do not follow some imagined person or someone who was just a good man. We are Christ followers and Christ is the light of the world. He is still shining in each person, sometimes the light is dim or seems to be snuffed out, but it is there. It may appear that darkness has overcome, but the light of the world still shines in and through each one of us who are called to be images bearers of light, images bearer of God.

As you go from here today pledge to look for the light of Christ in yourselves and in each person you encounter. Bring light into the world because of your love, because of Christ’s love, because God so loves the world. May the transfiguration of Christ, the light that shone so brightly, shine through us in ways that transform us, our families, our community, and imagine.... all the world.

In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.