

Light

February 25, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled, "Light." Thank you to Dave, Ed, Temi, and Glynnis for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Genesis 1, 1 to 4. Happy birthday this week to Tim and to Martin.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

We welcome you to come in and take a seat and join us in our expressions of praise to God this morning. Welcome. We're glad you're here. [Microphone feedback] I'm not glad I'm here. [The angels are singing. Be not afraid.] The trumpet has sounded.

Happy Lunar New Year. Several celebrations and lots of good food and a full moon to boot. Josh and Emily have a new baby, Jethro. So that's good for them. Rafael and Lorena are still waiting patiently, and we are prayerful for their safe arrival this coming week, perhaps. Congratulations to Amy. As she prepares to move into a new role as CAO at Great Lakes, one of the administration officers there, the chief administration officer. Annual meeting here, February the 25th, Sunday at 1130. Corporation members please plan to attend. Ask Adam how to become a member following the service this morning.

Prayer requests. Helene's parents have arrived in Halifax. She and Violet will be visiting them in the coming weeks. So we pray for their travels and their reunion with parents. Marie is in hospital following a stroke, and she is one of the gifted knitters that comes on Tuesday. Our prayers are with her and her husband Edd.

Have a brief reading, and then we'll have a word of prayer. Let's read and continue this prayer. And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ and to the glory and praise of God.

Continuing our prayer, we are thankful, Father, for our families. We're prayerful for Raphael and Lorena and their, the birth, upcoming birth of their child. We pray for their new addition. We pray for Marie and others that are struggling with health and well-being. We pray for their strength. We pray that you be with us during our expressions of praise this morning, that we may be united and strengthened and encouraged by our presence here and one another. This is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen.

Communion

Well, this morning, I wore something to church deliberately. So you look at my outfit. What's the dominant color? [Boring!] [laughter] Boring. I see. Okay. I'm dressed in as green as I can be green. And I want to tell you a little bit about the significance of green. You see, my clothes are green because the light from here reflects green. It absorbs all the other colors, but it reflects green. And in nature, this is a common thing. We have a juniper that's growing wild in my backyard. It's green, even in the middle of the winter. It's green. So when it gets warmer, it's all ready to go. It's going to start producing food.

A little bit about green. Well, there's green in plants. It's called chlorophyll, and the chlorophyll is found in chloroplasts. Some of the biology students at Great Lakes are grinning. They know where this is going. Anyhow, when light hits those chloroplasts and those chlorophyll molecules that appear green, they get excited, and they release little electrons. And electrons are released with energy. And that energy then gets stored in another molecule called adenosine triphosphate. And that molecule pushes reactions that occur in what is called cyclic and non-cyclic photophosphorylation. And eventually, eventually that energy ends up, and reactions that involve carbon dioxide, end up as a sugar. Now in a few minutes, sometimes we sing this, "Fruits of the Spirit." You know, "Fruit of the Spirit," not a pineapple, you know, or a pear, or whatever. Banana. Yeah, a banana. But that energy, you see, is stored in the fruit, in the plant. It provides energy for all the plant's processes, including the production of fruit.

So how many of you had fruit for breakfast today? Okay, you were eating the end product of this process that I'm talking about, but you know what? The whole process starts with light. If you read the side of a cereal box, you don't see that. You see a whole bunch of names for molecules that are in the cereal box, in the product in the cereal box. I used to tell my students, "If you can't read it, don't eat it." But most of those molecules somehow have a connection to this process that I just talked about.

Light. It's a source of energy that fuels this planet. You go to a fill-up station, go to Shell, and you put the stuff in your car. It's a hydrocarbon. An organic molecule. It provides energy so you can get from place to place. The origin of all that is light.

Now we're having a time to pause now. I'm telling you that light is important in everything in our entire existence. And Clint is going to talk about this today. The light that came from darkness into this world. Jesus Christ came. Why? To save us. To point us to those fruits of the spirit. To point us to behaviors that honor Him. To push us to behaviors that honor Him. That we might know the light coming from the sun that fuels the ecosystems and the light coming from heaven that fuels our lives for Him. Amen. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we are thankful so much for the light that comes into our lives in the form of sunlight that provides so much energy for our whole life experience. But more so as we commune and as we think of Jesus, that Jesus came in the world to be a light to all of us about your nature and about what's important to you. A light to show us your grace and mercy and love that we can extend to others in this experience that we have here on earth. We're thankful Father for your son who came, who sacrificed himself, who was in the deepest state of humility that anybody could imagine. Something that you put yourself in a human form to be humiliated and tortured and killed. Our only conclusion is we know we are important if you did this to us, for us. We pray Father that we might live our lives in such a way to honor you and your mission for salvation. I pray in Jesus' name. [MUSIC PLAYING]

Reading

Genesis 1, verses 1 to 4. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light, and there was light. God saw that light was good, and he separated light from darkness." Thank you.

Sermon

Light

Good morning. As I was thinking about what to talk about-- Adam had asked me to talk to you this morning. And as I was thinking about it, I did what I so often do, and I'm always telling you, I was scrolling through Facebook. And my stepdaughter, Lindsey, had posted something that she was thinking about. So I'll read you her post. "What kind of a light are you? I was looking at light bulb boxes the other day. And on the outside, they were describing what the ideal space and usage was for different watts and colors and styles. Light is always light, but in what setting have you been placed to shine? Are you the bright white light needed for fine hands on activities like building or making things? The comforting light of a flickering candle. Thinking about all the different ways light shows up just tells me thinking about all the different ways God uses us in our circumstances. I may be more like a overcast day or light through the trees, the interplay between shadow and sunshine right now. Again, are you a light on a hill? But how are you shining? How is God shining in and through your life today?" And then she says, "Sorry for the disjointed thought. It felt beautiful in my head." That happens, right? And then sort of the background picture was, you are the light of the world, a city built on a hill that cannot be hidden in Matthew 5, verse 14. And so I got thinking about light. And I thought, hmm, interesting.

First of all, of course, I wondered where light-- what kind of scriptures were there about light and so on? So I'm going to kind of take you on a journey of my study of light and the scriptures. So first of all, light, light as it's being used here, is what we call a metaphor. And it's something that is regarded as representative of something, or it's symbolic of something else. And it's especially something abstract. So when we talk about light, we're talking really about what kind of metaphors do we see in the Bible.

So we start off with Genesis. I knew that, but I looked it up. In the beginning, the first thing that God made was light. So in Genesis 1, 1 through 8, and then in 14 to 19, we see two instances of light. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening, and there was morning the first day."

Then it goes on, on the fourth day. And God said, let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth. And it was so. "God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth to govern the day and the night and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day." So I was thinking, that's a little curious. And I had never thought of this before, but it's like, that's a little curious that God made the sources of light after he made the light. Not an earth experience. This made me curious in turn. And really, for me, this is what studying the Bible is. It's following a curiosity and taking the time to follow it and see, gee, I wonder.

So it made me curious about what is light. I do remember from high school science-- and please forgive me, Amy, Ed, anybody else who's a real scientist. This is just my memory. But one of the things that I remember about light is that if you measure-- light sort of has a duality. It's like a wave. It acts as both a

wave and a particle. If you want to measure the wave in this one experience, it behaves as a particle, and you can't measure it. And then in another experiment to measure the parti-col-ness of the light, it behaves as a wave. It's essentially immeasurable in that sense. But then I thought, well, surely science has advanced a little bit since I went to high school, which was a little while ago. And I stopped to think about it. It's decades and decades. In fact, it's half a century ago, dear. So I thought about it, and so I went down another little hole. So I found a website that was called Why Does Light Exist? by David A. Berglen. And I thought, well, really, that's what I'm asking, is why does light exist? What is it that makes it exist?

So if you thought Ed's little foray into science was like, wait till you hear this. It's like, I'm not going to read the whole thing, because it was-- I don't know if this has ever happened to you, you read something, it's like, I sort of get it, but I feel like I'm just sort of touching the bare edge of it. So he-- and his goal was to put it into everyday language for us mere mortals. So he said, in this sort of mishmash about-- of science that he was talking about, he talked about local symmetry and global symmetry at the quantum level. You lost me kind of already, but it seems that scientists have posited the theory that photons must exist, because if they do, the theory works. I'll say that again. They posit that photons must exist, because if they do, the theory works. OK.

I don't know about you, but that's a little higgley-piggledy, and he talks about that. He says, this sort of does sound like pulling a rabbit out of a hat, and it is. It somewhat is. In other words, the theory satisfies the fact that the light exists without photons actually being provable as existing. [HUMMING] But for me, how I read that was, yet again, here we have something that God has created that it's unknowable, the connection. It's un-put-your-finger-on-it-exactly-able. That's not really a word, but it's like, you just-- why is there life? Well, there's life because there is life. OK, but why? You can't say. Why is light divided into the color spectrum? We can talk about wavelengths, but why? What's the purpose of that? Well, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh. OK, but deep down, why? Like, all of these-- and it goes on and on and on. I love to hear Ed talk about science and so many ways that it all comes down to, why does this happen? And it comes down because, for me, it has the fingerprint of God. And so for me, why do we have light is the fingerprint of God. But what also became very clear to me when he was talking-- and he had graphs and so on-- and there's like, this is what should have-- so it's all a theory, but it's improvable. It's-- but what came to me was light is part of the order of the universe. It organizes nothing into something. And it's like the foundation. And so that kind of resonated with me. So off I galloped again.

So where do we see light in the Bible? So apart from where we saw it in Genesis, in Exodus 13:20-22, it says, "After leaving Sukkoth, they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day, the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." The book of Job has 31 references to light. In Psalm 89, verse 15, the author says, "Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you who walk in the light of your presence, Lord."

Jesus began his ministry by quoting from Isaiah and talking about the light. Matthew 4, verse 16, says, "The people living in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned."

In Luke 2, verse 31, Simeon, after Jesus is presented at the temple, calls Jesus a light for revelation to the Gentiles. In Luke 2, verses 8 to 10 and 14, it says, "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid. But the angel said to them, do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Light everywhere.

In John 1, verses 1 to 6, the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

In John 1, verses 9 to 12 and then 17 and 18, it says, "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was made-- he was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father and has made him known. And so we follow Jesus and try to be like him."

I've always found-- I studied this many, many years, this little chunk, many, many years ago, and it has always resonated with me. In Genesis 3, verse 24, God is driving out the Adam and Eve from the garden. And it says, "After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the Tree of Life." And for me, that flashing sword is a blending of the metaphor of the sword and the light. And so then in Hebrews 4, verses 12 to 16, it says, "The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who is ascended into heaven, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are. Yet he did not sin." Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We talked a little bit a couple of weeks ago over communion about our times of need. And our need is sometimes so very strong. We ask ourselves, how will I manage? How will I get along? And sometimes we ask ourselves, what am I going to do? But sometimes we ask ourselves, what am I going to do? Maybe after the death of someone beloved, maybe after a surgery that wasn't successful, maybe after a life altering event, maybe after the breakup of a relationship, maybe after I decide to give my life to Christ, maybe after I die. But how do we respond? We respond by remembering and believing him, and we respond by loving others. We won't do that perfectly. God already knows that. Our striving to believe are striving to believe. Not necessarily our belief, but our striving to believe and to love is a credit that he gives us because we try.

What does scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness in Romans 4 and 3. Paul reminds us about Abraham's faith. In Romans 4, verses 20 to 5, verse 2a. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and

gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness. This is why it was credited to Abraham as righteousness. The words it was credited to him were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him and who raised Jesus, our Lord, from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

So how will I get along? How will I manage? What am I going to do? I'm going to remember. I'm going to remember the Lord. I'm going to believe. And I'm going to love. And as we strive to live in God's light, learning how to love better, our light shines as a beacon beckoning others to join us. In 2 Peter--

2 Peter something, verses 5 to 8 and 10 to 11, it says, "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness--" lost my place. "--and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Matthew 5, verses 14 to 16 says, "You are the light of the world. You-- me-- you-- not just you-- you and me-- are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." We-- that's each one of us together with Jesus-- literally change the narrative of our life and the life of others. We literally change the pathway. We literally change it by living in the light. This is how, through God's grace, we bring glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests. So no study is-- of the Bible is really complete without looking at how it applies to my life. And I believe that that's very true. What we need to do as we study and we learn things and our brain goes, whoa, that's so cool. OK, but how does it apply to me? So I'm going to share with you from my life how I'm working with the Holy Spirit who is prompting me to grow and to change, to be more like me.

So how am I reflecting light into my world? I struggle with what I've called laziness. Talking with my best friend, I told her about my struggle. She said that-- I said to her, as I was describing it, lazy isn't really the right word, but I'll call it laziness. And so she decided she'd Google laziness and see if she could find some synonyms. Here are some of them. Some of them are like, oh, boy. Apathetic, careless, dull, inattentive, indifferent, lackadaisical, lethargic, passive, sleepy, tired, and weary. OK. Well, we talked for a little bit, and I decided-- we decided together, it's really carelessness, but not carelessness the way we usually think of carelessness. I struggle with care less. Less care. Carelessness. I would say for me that my biggest sins against the love that Jesus calls me to are sins of omission. Absolutely.

James 4, verse 17 says, anyone then who knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. It's not sin for you. It's sin for me. When I know the good I ought to do and I don't do it. Part of my problem is that I really like to do what I like to do. We're sort of all like that. I like to do what I like to do, and I get very engrossed in doing things. I love to get really deep and chew into something.

I don't consider, though, the things that I could do to let my life shine in others' lives. Most of the time, it doesn't even occur to me. When I was talking with my friend-- and this was sort of a lovely back and forth-- she said to me, well, consider your upbringing. So I wasn't raised in a home that was really focused on sharing or involving anyone in most things. My mom wouldn't have dreamed of making food for someone else. We didn't go to church. I wasn't good at making friends because it really didn't occur to me to initiate conversations with other people. I would never-- like, we never visited anyone in the hospital. So for me, it's a struggle. But it's also a struggle to find balance. So showing my light in other people's lives also isn't about being so busy doing things to help other people that I completely wear myself out. And nor is it about being so busy. And this one speaks to me. Nor is it about being so busy that I don't have time to have an important conversation with someone that I love who needs it. So it's kind of this back and forth struggle. My kids, my grandkids, those people that God have placed uniquely on my heart, no one else is going to have the same conversations with my own children that I can have. If I'm so busy doing stuff for other people that I don't have time to have, those conversations that's not good either. So I struggle. I struggle.

And that's why I'm talking to you about this. It's like whenever we look at something from the scriptures, there's this complexity that's involved. There's this tug and pull. And I don't do it perfectly. It's impossible to do it perfectly. But what I can do is come back and remember and believe. And so it's important to me to let the Spirit work in me, let the Spirit help me to discern what is good, what is best. I have to pray for a more willing heart. Sometimes I have to pray to want to pray about having a more willing heart. Right? I'm selfish. I'm selfish. Like I said, I want to do what I want to do. But help me God to have, help me God to even want to want to be more loving and serving and giving. Help me to find ways, to see ways. Help me to know a way to let the light that has shone into my life and transformed my life and continues to transform my life shine into the light of others.

So one of the things I love about Don is the way that he speaks about the new heaven and the new earth. And so we began in Genesis and let me read Revelation. And yet again, let's see what we see about light. So in Revelation 21, 11, 21, 23, 25 and 26, 22:five, and 16 and 17, so I run them together.

One of the seven angels said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb." It shone with the glory of God and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel like a jasper, clear as crystal. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it. For the glory of God gives it the light of the light. For the glory of God gives its light and the lamb is its lamp. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright morning star. The spirit and the bride say, "Come," and the one who hears say, "Come, let the one who is thirsty come and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of light."

Light at the beginning of time to order the universe according to God's plan, and light at the end of time, bringing fulfillment to his plan. We're living in the middle somewhere. And it's cool that we get to live in a time that we can participate in God's work to bring light and order to his dearly beloved world. So let's go this week and consider for ourselves, each one of us, how to be a light and to show the light of the world to others. Thank you.

Closing Prayer

- Thank you. Thank you. Thank all of you for your presence and participation, especially for illumination, in the spiritual sense. And there are so many things we don't understand about the natural light, but we have manipulated and created our own light because we can flip a switch and make light come on, but it's in your heart. I have one scripture I will read and then we'll have a closing prayer. You covered a lot of scriptures. Good stuff. And I don't think you got this one, but I may be repeating. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 5. For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Let's pray.

Father, we realize we need your light, your spirit to enable us to recognize and understand the light of your presence. May we be what you need us to be for others and for ourselves. Grant us wisdom, peace, and your light of influence in our lives is our prayer through Jesus Christ. Amen.

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