

John 1:6-8, 19-28 – Advent 2
Dec. 13, 2020

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our returning Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Does anyone else here like to look at the moon? I check it every night, mostly when I close my shades, because my window opens up to the east and it usually frames the moon just perfectly.

Sometimes I'll catch it unexpectedly and then be thankful that I saw it. I always say hi to the moon. That maybe strange, but <shrug>

During Advent, moon gazing is actually really quite fitting, because the moon reflects the light of the sun into the darkness.

When I look at the moon, it always gives me hope and comfort knowing that it may be dark here, but the sun is shining on the other side of the world.

I can't even fathom not having the moon around, although one day a month it is dark, but the rest of the month there is always at least a little glimmer of sunshine in the night.

That is hope to me. Light in the darkness.

During Advent, as the days get darker and the darkness gets longer, the moon reminds us that God's light is always shining and because of that light, we know we will get through the darkness. "The sun will come out tomorrow."

As the moon disappears, the sun takes over and the promise the moon made known to us is fully realized in our presence.

John the Baptist is a lot like the moon. He is not the light, but he is testifying to the light. He is reflecting the light, God's light, to the people, a light that they will soon get to know.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world and no darkness can overcome him.

Light shines in the darkness and, now as much as ever, we need that light reflected in our lives.

With the Covid-19 daily death numbers surpassing those of 9/11 every day, we need some light. We need some hope.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he reminds us to pray in all circumstances – in the light and the darkness, because no matter what time it is, God is always with us.

Pray without ceasing so that we can stay connected to the light, and when we are connected to the light, we are able then to reflect the light back into the darkness.

Hope is our night light, and spending time in prayer testifies to the light. Praying means that we have faith that God will turn all darkness into light.

Last week I got my paper turned in for my Global Christologies class. I chose the continent of Oceania for my paper, because I figured that's the closest I'm going to get to a tropical vacation for quite a long time.

As I was doing my research, I came across a bit of wisdom from the Pacific Islanders. This also connects to the moon, because the moon impacts the waves of the ocean.

In the paper I was reading, the author talked about how when you are on the top of a wave you can see clearly what's all around you. As you surf down the wave, all you can see is the water that surrounds you. But, in the midst of it all you know something is happening. You can feel it in the waves, but you don't necessarily know exactly what is happening.

I thought that was a really good metaphor for faith. We are all surfing. Sometimes we see pretty clearly what is going on around us, other times we don't. Sometimes all we can see is the water that is surrounding us, but in the midst of it all, the ups and the downs, we feel God at work, even if we do not know exactly what God is up to.

In the darkness, the moon reflects the light, assuring us that God is at work. We may not know what is going on, but we know that God has not abandoned us, so we ride the wave and give thanks in all circumstances, because God is with us. God is Emmanuel. God is the one who works for our good even in the midst of darkness. That's hope, faith, and love.

And because we live in that hope, faith, and love, we are like John in the wilderness pointing to the light as it reflects off of us. We are not the light, but the light can be known through us, because the light lives within us.

In baptism, we are charged with, "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works of love and give thanks to God our creator."

Acts of love reflect the light. Our acts of love are like the moon.

As you may or may not know, today is St Lucy's day, or Santa Lucia Day. She was killed on this day in Sicily under the direction of the Roman Emperor Diocletian in the year 304.

In Latin, luc is the root for words like lucere, which mean to shine. Did you know that luck is associated with having light shining on you? You learn something new every day, right?

In Scandinavian countries where it is really dark right now and the days are short, St. Lucy is celebrated with light returning, light taking over the darkness. In the Julian calendar, this date was the shortest day of the year, the winter solstice. Today in the Gregorian calendar it is off about a week, but Lucy is still celebrated as reflecting God's light in the world.

As the story goes, Lucy wears candles on her head and brings rolls to eat on a platter, because she would deliver food to the hungry poor who were living in the catacombs. It was dark in there, so she needed candles on her head to light the way, because her hands were full.

Lucy literally brought the light of God's love to those living in darkness.

Today, young woman in Scandinavian families reenact Lucy's acts of love by wearing candles on their heads and carrying saffron buns to the family for breakfast. The buns are made with saffron, because they give that really pretty yellow color, which is also associated with light.

So, today we remember St. Lucy and how she brings God's light into the darkness through acts of love, and as with all of the saints, we look to her as an example of how to live in the world. How to share God's light.

We are like John the Baptist, and Lucy. We are like the moon reflecting God's light.

Sometimes we are a full moon, and sometimes we are a new moon, but no matter what we do, we can reflect God's light, because we know God's love for us. It lives within us. And that love is not only for us, but for all of creation.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

So, as we sit in the darkness, we still see the light and we know God is with us.

Because of Jesus death and resurrection, we know that darkness does not have the final say, and because Jesus overcame death, we will get through the darkness that surrounds us.

And because we've gotten through other darkneses in our lives, we know that we will get through this one as well, and maybe even shine brighter on the other side.

After all, the moon goes through phases, from new to full, at sometimes shining super bright and at others not so much. But, the good news remains, and without periods of darkness, seeds do not grow and flowers do not bloom.

But, even in the midst of darkness we still have faith, hope, and love. That can never be taken away from us. Through acts of love for others, that light is reflected into other people's darkness.

So, do not be afraid. God has not abandoned us. God is with us always.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. Just take a look up at the moon every night and be constantly reminded of that as you give thanks to God in all circumstances.

Light shines in the darkness and it cannot be overcome.

Thanks be to God. Amen.