

Getting to Know Jesus, the Christ

**Brentwood Presbyterian Church
Feb 9, 2014**

The Light for Humanity

**John 1:9 & Psalm 112
(248, 376, 416, 727)**

I have spent the past week
northeast of Toronto
visiting friends who are living through cancer.
They were both diagnosed this past fall
and will probably die within the next year.

In many ways, certainly in terms of my faith,
they have been surrogate parents with me.
My Mom died in 1970 and my Dad in 1980.
I met John and Bona Duncan in 1978,
just after I had started my ministry
with Glebe Presbyterian Church in Toronto.
They had attended Glebe
when John was studying at Knox College
and the congregation invited John to preach anniversary.

Our friendship has grown and deepened every since then.

John and Bona take nothing lightly.
They ponder what is going on within them and around them.
They bring that into constant conversation with their faith.
They recall and reconsider favourite passages of Scripture
in the light of what they are experiencing.
As their bodies fail and wither,
their souls flourish.

They do get frustrated, and angry, and miserable.
They lash out at each other, and themselves, and those who are visiting.
They are classic examples of Paul's treasures in earthen vessels.
But then, aren't we all?

So, that was the context
in which I was pondering this passage this week.

Bona was having a second round of radiation treatments.
They live in a little town called Norland.
It's about an hour and a half from Peterborough,
where the treatments are provided.
So I drove, on winter roads in Ontario,
four times, from Tuesday to Friday.
It was a great time to talk.

What Bona has realized,
with some surprise and much comfort,
is that she is facing the transition of death
with profound confidence and a great sense of freedom.
She has as complex a personal and social history
as the rest of us.
It shapes these attitudes.
But the particular forms these gifts take in her life at this point
is not crucial to this sermon.

What is crucial is the enlightenment she has enjoyed
as the the energy of confidence and freedom
has broken into her busy anxieties
and brought rest to her soul.

She has a growing confidence
that she will live through death
and enjoy a richer relationship with God and her loved ones.
That gives her a profound sense of freedom
from what she is leaving and for what she is entering.

We were exploring together
how best to nourish this confidence and freedom
that has blossomed within her soul,
how to celebrate and sustain it.

We found ourselves talking about the old Celtic tradition
of seeing the day start when we go to bed.
That way, we begin the day with rest and recovery
for what is to come.
Sleep is not recovery from what has been
but rather preparation for what is to come.
In that restful preparation,
if we focus our attention just prior to going to sleep
on some feature of God's relationship with us,
then we are more open to workings of the Holy Spirit
as she nourishes us to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ.

It struck me as a good example
of what our text this morning is really getting at.

It is a testimony, a witness,
to John's confidence that in Jesus Christ
we are united with **the** light of God
that brings our freedom as human beings
into alignment with God's intent for us.

We are free of busy anxieties
to be confident in our relationships –
with God, with others, and with ourselves.
Each day, as we begin it in rest with God,
we let go of the anxieties that built up during the previous day
and focus forward to the blessings we can be when we awake.

In that sabbath of sleep,
God's Spirit works in love to refresh and restore,
strengthening us for what is to come.

This is a time of enlightenment,
of being in touch with the light that brings life
in all its fullness
in relationship with God.

That's what's revealed in these opening words of John's Gospel
that we have been pondering and playing with together
for these past couple of weeks.

It's the multiple and marvelous ways in which
the love, life, and light of God
infiltrates and infuses our lives with grace and truth.

It's a kaleidoscope of energy,
filled with confidence and freedom,
that glows from our souls
with the life force that only God can provide,
a life force that takes us from this plane of being to the next.

My conversations with John had a different focus,
but were equally deep and enlightening.
They will no doubt show up in a future sermon,
simmered some week in the sabbath of sleep.

For today, I leave you with Bona's example of faithful living through death,
faithful living into a deeper experience of the love, life, and light
that is God for all humanity.