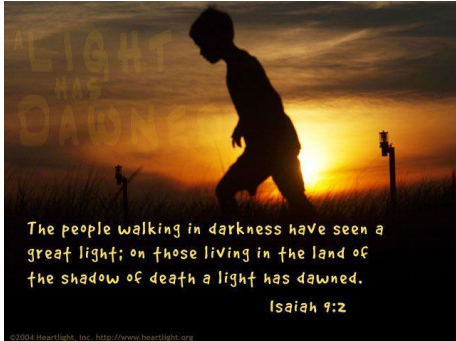


Light in the Shadow of Death

Sermon Notes for Jan 29, 2017 at Brentwood



Ps 127:1-9 and Matthew 4:12-23

**The people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
for those who sat in the region and shadow of
death, light has dawned.
(Matt 4:16)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- I spent some time this week sitting in the region and shadow of death – with the family and friends of one of Jill, Signe, and Diane’s classmates who died after an agonizing battle with cancer – hearing of a cancer diagnosis in a close friend who is still stuck in the dreadful darkness of that death sentence – hearing for the first time stories of the depths of depression and despair that other friends have experienced throughout their lives as the Let’s Talk campaign to open up conversations about mental illness took place on Jan 25 – being inundated on my Facebook feed with the darkness that is descending on the United States of America – both the rage at that darkness and the resilience that is emerging in the face of it – let’s be honest about this – our worlds are still faced with a lot of darkness – the regions and shadows of death are very real – just what does our God, revealed to us most clearly in this scruffy peasant preacher from Nazareth in Galilee, have to say in the heart of our darkness?
- In many ways, it’s not terribly dramatic – it’s not going to capture much attention in our thrill-saturated and escape-oriented society – and it doesn’t (and here’s the most difficult part of all of this) take us out of the darkness – the God revealed in Jesus comes into the darkness and sits there with us – the beauty of the Lord is an accompanying and accepting presence – it’s a love that cannot be extinguished or snuffed out by whatever darkness surrounds us – and God’s Spirit, true to God’s ways that we see in Jesus, whispers into our ears, “Look ahead. Look over there. The dawn is breaking. There is light seeping through those dark storm clouds. I am with you as we walk together through this darkness to the light of my house and home. The way may be long, and winding, and frustrating, and confusing. But know that your prayers for my presence have been answered in Jesus, my beloved One.”

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

I don’t know about you, but at times, and especially this week feeling all that darkness descend yet again, this just doesn’t feel like enough – I want it fixed – I want the brightness of the noonday sun and I want it now! – but that is not to be – God’s ways are not my ways as I sit in that fearful and despairing snit – what I do get from God’s compassionate conversations is this – I am with you in the midst of the darkness – my light is dawning on the whole of creation – and I want you to get up and be both comfort and challenge to those who can’t see the dawn yet – let them see the dawn in the glow of your presence

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
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