

This is Advent, the season where we anticipate the birth of Jesus who is the light of the world, living water, the bread of life. We wait for Jesus who shelters us under the shadow of his wings, and who brings us all together. This Advent, Abby and I will begin a 5 week sermon series that will look at Jesus through the lens of Light, Water, Food, Shelter and Community.

I begin, as God did in the beginning of creation, with Light. We've heard the theme of light in the readings:

- In Isaiah: *"come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!"*
- in Paul's letter to the Romans echoed in the collect: *"Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."*

Light is necessary for us to live. It gives us warmth, it makes it possible for plants to grow, animals to hunt, and birds to fly. Yes, I know that some birds fly at night and some animals hunt at night, but most do not.

We're comfortable when there's lots of light. Light makes us happy—staves off Seasonal Affective Disorder-- it's easier to drive in the light—to see where we're going. Light helps us to strive boldly into our futures.

And I think, at our core, we're all afraid of the dark. I think that fear is possibly even coded into our human DNA.

I don't like to even admit that—because I love nighttime, the moon, walking in the dark with the stars above me.

But last week I was watching a show on TV—and much of the episode was shot in the near dark, or at least in very dim lighting.

I kept getting edgier and edgier, and couldn't figure out why—the show wasn't really that scary.

It finally occurred to me that the reason I was nervous and fearful, was because I couldn't see what was going on clearly. When we don't have enough light it can seem that scary things might be coming from the dark just out of our eyesight—undetected.

Do you ever feel that way when you find yourself unexpectedly in the dark?

My daughter is weirdly afraid of the curtains being open at night in the house. She says she is always scared that she'll look up and there will be an unexpected face in the window. Suddenly. Something that snuck up on her.

She obviously has no fear of windows being opened during daylight—because she can – after all--see what's coming.

We can't see in the dark. That's why I think we are afraid of it. We aren't afraid just because it's dark outside, we are afraid because we are at a clear disadvantage—and sometimes even danger—when we can't see things approaching in the dark.

But darkness makes us appreciate one thing: light.

If I were to light a candle right now and place it on the altar, you would hardly see the flame, unless you were to actually look for it, because there is so much ambient light in here.

But last week—in the first service—all the lights went out for a moment during the Nicene Creed. It was startling, but my eyes were instantly drawn to the flames of the two altar candles that were lit. They were suddenly very bright. And I had forgotten all about

them. Until all other lights failed. And as my eyes focused on them, I wasn't scared.

Jesus is the light of the world. Even when – maybe especially when—all other lights fail, and they will eventually, Jesus is our light.

And even we can't know how big that statement is. Did you know that the light that we can see with our eyes is just a small fraction of all of the light that exists in the Universe?

And we don't understand everything in the universe. The word we see translated as *light* in the scripture meant two things—that brightness that allows us to see, and also that illumination that allows us to understand. Light was often used as a metaphor, and when we see the word “light” we can remember that it often meant understanding.

We don't always use it that way today—but there are still vestiges of it. For example—when we say we finally “see the light”, or when the “lightbulb comes on”. In both of those instances, we mean we “get it”—we understand.

So Christ is the light we see with our eyes, and the also the light which brings sudden understanding to our souls.

This advent, there will be many lights sparkling everywhere. Each display is bigger and brighter than the last, but look for the flame of the light of Christ. It's there. Shining amidst all the chaotic lights of our world. Waiting until we need it most.

It's the light that never dies.

Amen.