

Scout Sunday Message Text – February 11, 2024 – Pastor Paula Kraus

Responsive Reading: Matthew 5:3-16 (ESV)

Message - “This Little Light of Mine”

I am reading from the 2nd letter of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 4:

New Revised Standard Version

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Word of God, for the people of God – praise be to God

Today is what the church considers Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany. I love it that the scouts chose “This Little Light of Mine” for the special music because it is light that I want to talk about today. Epiphany is a season of light, beginning when the Magi followed the star to Jesus’ birth place and ending today, when Jesus was transformed on God’s holy mountain and his clothes shone with heavenly light. Our scripture tells us that it is God who said “Let light shine out of darkness” – at creation when, as Genesis tells us, 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, we learn from the Gospel of John that Jesus himself is the light of the world, “The true light that gives light to every man” (John 1:9).

When Paul writes that the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers he also tells us that it is the glory of Christ – the image of God – that reveals the light when we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. That is the light that we carry in our hearts – kids, it is that light you sang about. “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” My question for you to think about today is, “Do you know what that means and how do you let your light shine?”

In Jesus’ time and when Paul wrote this letter to the people of Corinth, it wasn’t easy to keep the light of the good news shining. There were conflicts, authorities arrested people for their beliefs. Look what they did to Jesus – and they put Paul himself in jail on more than one occasion for preaching and teaching about Jesus. Those who follow Jesus, those who were trying to keep the light shining were not popular in their towns and villages. They were different because they believed in one God, and one Lord Jesus Christ.

But they did what they needed to do to keep that light shining in their hearts and to create a light in the hearts of those who did not yet believe. Paul writes to them to help them realize there are many who were unable to see God's light. The ones for whom the gospel is still veiled. What did the believers do to not only keep the light of God's word shining in their hearts but also help that light reach others? They became examples for living in the kingdom.

You can read in the book of Acts that they shared with each other so that no one went without the essentials to life. They supported each other not only emotionally and spiritually but with their resources as well. They prayed for each other in times of trouble, you can read in Acts about the Christians gathering and praying for Paul who was in prison at the time. One important thing the followers of Jesus did was to share the Gospel with others, they worshiped together, they preached and taught wherever they traveled, and they led people to believe Christ's word.

Then, as Christianity spread – and it wasn't easy – the followers of Christ gave of themselves to ensure that the light of Jesus and the Gospel kept shining. People gathered first in each others' homes, then in larger and larger places to worship and learn of the good news. They shared resources, shared meals together and treated everyone as equal citizens in God's kingdom. The good news spread throughout the entire known world because of those who struggled to let their lights shine. They followed Jesus example and put the interests of the community, the interests of others before their own interest and that is how we got to where we are today – as scouts and members of a community of believers worshipping God and Jesus together.

Do you think there might still be darkness in our world, places where the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is still hidden? What is it, do you think, are the reasons darkness still exists? Maybe because people are not willing to share the good news or share anything for that matter. Maybe because for some people in this world it is too hard to believe what Jesus teaches. Some people just can't understand why Jesus would love the world so much that he gave up his throne to live with us, to try to understand us and teach us the ways of God's kingdom. Maybe there are some people who are just too busy with their phones and their gaming systems or their fortunes to care about anything but themselves. But for those of us who believe God's word, it is the truth that lets our light shine out of darkness.

Believers know that when the Satan veils the truth and confusion reigns, God will not leave us. We know that when the world changes around us, God will not leave us. We know that when all around us is silent, God will not leave

us. When faithfulness feels beyond us, God will not leave us. We worship the One who will not leave us – the one who said “Let light shine out of darkness.”

So today, in this world and for you who stood up this morning and said these words “On my honor, I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight.” Do you know what you promised? You were promising to “Let light shine out of darkness;” you were promising to do the very same things that the early followers of Christ did to keep the light of God’s word shining in the darkness.

When you, as scouts, or as parents of scouts or as members of God’s family, do these things – helping others, doing a good turn daily, practice random acts of kindness, take care of creation meaning the earth and its creatures wild and otherwise, you are letting light shine in the darkness. When you obey not only God’s law, but also the laws of your community and your nation – you are letting light shine in the darkness. When you live your lives honestly and cleanly – you are examples to the world of what living in God’s kingdom looks like and you are letting light shine in the darkness.

In this church we believe in a “Priesthood of all believers” which to us means that each and every person who follows Christ can be a minister of the word. Every one of us, from the youngest to the oldest, because we have the light of the knowledge of the glory of God within us can carry that light into a world of darkness. You don’t have to go around carrying your bible and preaching to everyone you know – although who could stop you if you wanted to do that! Especially you scouts, as you live according to the Scout law, you ‘preach’ the word through your deeds and actions. You show others what it looks like to be morally straight and good citizens of the world you are letting your light shine.

I think you know that to be a scout you are a member of a Pack and or a Troop, you cannot be a scout alone, one person does not a troop or a pack make, you need others. That is what it means to be a follower of Christ too, you cannot do it alone you need others. Worship is done in community with other believers who can help you understand God’s words. I wonder if it’s other people, sharing with us and worshipping with us that enable us to keep our light shining. Yes, you can pick up a book, read it, and learn from it but how do you know that what you think you know from that book is right? How do you know your learning is correct? You listen to what others have learned from that same book, you talk about what you understand, and you gain better understanding. You do that as a scout troop or pack, you learn from each other – if someone is better at something than you are you let them teach you. That is what you do within a community of believers called a church. That is why following the

teachings of your family and your religious leaders is important to keeping your light shining.

So, this morning I heard you recite the scout oath and the scout law, I heard you singing “This Little Light of Mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” My challenge to you, as you leave here today, is this – take those promises to heart and be the light that shines in the darkness. Do the work as a scout, a scout parent, or a member of God’s family to tear apart the dark places in our world. Do your part to make this a better world, a better nation, and a better community. And I thank you for what you have already done as individuals in this scout troop and pack 4018.