

Lent 4 B/ 1
Trinity, Bend
Numbers 21:4-9
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

We live in a dark world. Just listen to the nightly news and you will hear stories of wars, mass shootings, climate change, and our current political mess, where our Congress does nothing and some members of the Supreme Court are accused of questionable behavior.

I believe our dark world has an effect on us. It makes it harder to live as people of the light. But it is possible to do so. Today's lessons may have the answer as to how to live radiating light.

In the gospel of John it says, " God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."

There is a story that comes from the Bedouin culture. "Bedouin" is the Aramaic name for "desert dwellers." These people lived similar to the way characters of the Old Testament did.

During a heated argument a young Bedouin struck and killed a friend of his. Knowing the ancient, inflexible customs of his people, the young man fled, running across the desert under the cover of darkness, seeking safety.

He went to the tent of the tribal chief in order to seek his protection. The old chief took the young Arab in. The chief assured him that he would be safe until the matter could be settled legally.

The next day, the young man's pursuers arrived, demanding the murderer be turned over to them. They would see that justice would prevail in their own way. "But I have given my word," protested the chief.

"But you don't know whom he killed!" they countered.

"I have given my word," the chief repeated.

"He killed your son!" one of them blurted out. The chief was deeply and visibly shaken with this news. He stood speechless with his head bowed for a long time. The accused and the accusers as well as curious onlookers waited breathlessly. What would happen to the young man?

Finally the old man raised his head. "Then he shall become my son," he informed them, "and everything I have will one day be his."

The young man certainly didn't deserve such generosity. And that, of course, is the point. Love in its purest form is beyond comprehension. No one can merit it. It is freely given. It is agape, the love of God. Look to the cross. At the cross we encounter love in its purest form.

In Ephesians Paul says, "It is by grace that you have been saved. ..this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

It is through grace that we have been adopted as children of God. As members of the family of God, we can live as loving people of the light.

Have you ever noticed that some people just radiate light where ever they go? When they enter a room full of people their light seems to spread to others.

In the story *Hello Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano

There is a scene that takes place after the lead character Sylvie has been told that she has a brain tumor and there is nothing the doctors can do about it. She was given 6 months to a year to live.

Like all of us, Sylvie's life has been full of ups and downs. One of the most difficult things for her was when her father, Charlie, died very suddenly.

Sylvie had been his favorite child. As she contemplates her situation she remembers her father. On the positive side she knows she is loved by her family and friends.

Charlie had told his daughter, what he perhaps needed to believe: that everything was beautiful, which meant his life—even though it disappointed Rose [his wife], even though it was almost over – had beauty.

Since her diagnosis, Sylvie [the librarian] saw beauty everywhere: in a perfectly arranged shelf of books, in the smile Emeline offered the baby in her arms, in the familiar lines of William's face.

People who live in the light see the beauty of the world around us. It's because of love that they can notice the beauty. They also share that love in the way they treat people.

Love empowers us to see people in a different way. When we see a need we find ways to fill that need. For example, if a friend has a problem we listen before offering advice or just listen as they find their own solution.

If we see someone hungry we offer food. That can be through Family Kitchen or donating to the local food bank. If a child needs to hear a story they often go to grandparents to read to them. If someone in the store is in a hurry we can offer to let them go ahead of us in the checkout line.

These are just a few examples. I'm sure you can think of more. As Michael Curry our Presiding Bishop says, " We are called to live in the Way of Love." When we do that we bring light into our dark world.