

Pastor's Corner

August 2016 – Rev. Jay Bissett

Light for the World

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16

It seems that everywhere we look we see darkness. Violence, hatred, disrespect, intolerance. Or perhaps a better way to put it is that there seems to be fewer and fewer lights of hope and goodness.

Part of this is the way the media works. Fear, danger, and sensationalism sell. There isn't much money in reporting good news. But I am afraid that part of the growing darkness is that there might be fewer “lights” out there to brighten our world because of the culture of divisiveness in our country. It seems that the way to deal with those who believe differently is to condemn, mock, label as stupid or worthless.

In order to be a light, you have to risk. You have to put yourself on the line. Risk-taking makes us vulnerable to those who like to do nothing but find fault with others.

As Christians we are to be lights to our community—to be an inspiration to others that point to God. It is scary in this world of cynicism, division, suspicion and intolerance of others who believe differently to put ourselves “out there”; to reveal our faith. Yet that is exactly what Jesus challenges us to do.

Jesus calls us to be a light to our community. He calls us to follow him in practicing forgiveness, non-violence, justice. He calls us to accept others who may be different. He calls us to offer hospitality to those who are hurting and rejected.

St. Francis of Assisi wrote “All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.” The fact that there seem to be fewer lights of goodness around us should not cause us to hide our lights; it should inspire us to shine brighter so that others may see the light of Jesus through us.

When a friend or co-worker says or does something we disagree with or don't understand, let us remember that we are all imperfect, and come from different perspectives and experiences. Let us react by seeking understanding rather than judging.

When someone says something hurtful, let us consider the possibility that we misconstrued or misunderstood. Even if there is spite or hatred, let us follow Jesus' teachings and offer love for hatred and forgiveness for enmity.

When we hear words that hurt others, that belittle or dehumanize, that promote prejudice, let us speak up for the full humanity of all God's children.

We are called, then, to love, forgive, welcome, and serve. Strive against the darkness. Take risks. Shine!