

Pastor's Ponderings

February 2023

*My eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.*

- Luke 2:30-32

February 2 is one of the most ancient Christian holy days, called Candlemas, celebrating the Presentation of Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. Luke tells us when Mary entered the temple with Jesus for her ritual purification 40 days after Jesus's birth, an elderly blind prophet who had been waiting all his life for the Messiah took the child in his arms and began praising God, proclaiming Jesus the savior and the light of the world revealing God's glory to all. During Advent we light candles in anticipation of Jesus's birth. At Christmas heavenly light shines on Jesus in a manger. Epiphany celebrates the shining star guiding seekers to Jesus. Candlemas marks the end of this cycle of light in the Christian calendar when medieval Christians would light candles and process from their church through the streets to symbolize taking the light of Christ out into the world.



In our contemporary culture, Groundhog Day has somehow overshadowed Candlemas, which may have come out of the Celtic belief that on this day approximately halfway between the winter solstice and the spring solstice the earth begins to wake up from its winter dormancy and new life begins to form in seeds beneath the ground and within the animals. I suppose the emergence of the hibernating groundhog symbolizes this nicely.

As the gospel of John emphasizes, Jesus as the revelation of God is the source of both light and life: "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Jesus passed this light and life on to his followers and clearly instructed them to carry it forth, saying, "you are the light of the world... 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."

We are the light of the world. We are called to let the light of divine life show in our own lives, to light up the world around us. This does not mean no one other than us has any light or life in them. It just means we are called to share the light that *is* in us, to let our light shine and to share it with others. And sharing our little bit of light can go a long way because it is part of the great eternal Light. Although we were not able to do it this year because of the blizzard, I'm sure you can see in your mind the beauty of the candlelight

Christmas Eve service when the flame from the Christ Candle is passed from candle to candle throughout the congregation, lighting up the whole room. When we share our light and life with others, in a smile, in a kindness, in gestures of helpfulness and good will, it usually brightens and enlivens their day so that they are moved to share some of their light and life with others. And so, the light spreads and the life grows, and the healing salve—the salvation—of Christ's love moves through the world.

May it be so.

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