

B Advent 3 Light Lessons and carols

The theme of this year's Lessons and Carols is light.

Old Testament

- In the beginning, God began the whole process of creation with the words, "*let there be light.*"
- Light became a symbol of God's action, a promise of goodness and wisdom.
- Darkness, especially in the ancient world came to symbolize evil and ignorance.
- Light was God's gift and pushed back the chaos of a dangerous world. God looked at the light and *saw that it was good.*
- The author of Ecclesiastes wrote, that "*Light is sweet.*" (Eccl. 11.7)
- And in Isaiah God tells Israel, *I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you. I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations...*
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New Testament

- Against this OT background, we are told in the gospel of John that John the Baptist *came to bear testimony to the light that has come into the world.*
- This light, of course is Jesus. John tells us that *Jesus was life and the life is the light of all people.*
- Jesus himself says, "*I am the light of the world.*" And adds "*Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.*"
- Later Jesus told his disciples, "*The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become children of light.*"

Advent

- In the Northern Hemisphere, Advent falls in the dark of winter.

- We light candles to remind us of the coming of the light on Christmas Eve.
- One of the things I learned along the way about John's use of the word *light* is that he is not imagining a flood light, a light that takes a way the darkness.
- Instead John understands Christ's light to be more like a spotlight that pierces the darkness.
- The darkness is still there but by the light we can get our bearings. We become reoriented. And like moths to a porchlight we are drawn to the light.
- That's what Christ's light is like. It draws us nearer to him. And it can make all the difference.

This week

- One day this week I woke up in a dark mood. I had come home late from a meeting the night before, was still a little tired and my head was spinning with lists and deadlines and the reality of the many "lasts" that I am facing. With that of course is grief.
- So I woke up in a dark mood...but I heard Bill bustling around the kitchen and I could smell the coffee. I pushed myself out of bed and came down for breakfast.
- My first words to Bill weren't very cheery. My dark mood sort of spilled all over the kitchen. Instead of trying to cheer me up he suggested I go into the computer room and watch our presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eatons's Advent message.
- She told about getting distracted by the demands of the being Bishop, and wife and mom and Christmas host. All of that was going through her mind when she realized she had driven *9 miles to work and had no idea how she got there. She didn't remember the traffic lights, the turns, the scenery—nothing. She had been so absorbed in what was coming up that she was completely oblivious to the present.....*
Later she told her spiritual director about this.
Her spiritual director recommended that Eaton meditate on four words: "Just this. Just now." It's a simple discipline, but not an easy one. It can alleviate all that anticipatory stress, but only if we are willing to quiet down.

*Near the end of Psalm 46, after descriptions of tumult and uproar, the Lord says, "Be still and know that I am God."
<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2017/12/disengage-the-autopilot/>*

Just this Just now Those are gospel words.

They provided the focus I needed but the focus is not matter of my prioritizing.

It is more like paying attention to where the light of Christ is pointing

If Jesus is the light, a spotlight, then the light of Christ has the power to point to what is really important.

Advent is a holy season, a season that bids us to be present, to be still, to notice and to just be. To be with our Lord.

So if life is chaotic and pulling you in a thousand directions and you are feeling overwhelmed. Let the Light of Christ point to what is most important and remember 4 little words:

Just this Just now.

This is the good news of the gospel.