

Let us pray... Christ be our light, shine in our hearts, shine through the darkness. Christ be our light so we may shine your light in this world today. Amen.

Today's Gospel is downright disturbing...

And then after you get over the shock of it all and really start to dig into it, it becomes even more unsettling...

Not only is there murder, deception, and deceit, but this Gospel is drenched in politics...

Our Gospel is centered around a ruler – Herod – who is drunk on his power, afraid to lose face, unwilling to listen to truth, or stand up for what is right...

So, I could preach to you on how dangerous that kind of ruler is, how easily it is to become corrupt, and how awful the consequences can be, especially for those who are innocent.

But with everything going on in this unsettling election year, and now the horrible shooting that took place yesterday, I think we are all in need of some hope.

Of finding a way forward together that is saturated in Christ's light.

But sometimes that light is hard to find, and requires a little bit of courage to tear down the curtain and let the light in...

Which brings me to the last sentence in our Gospel... Which says, when the disciples heard about John's death they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Because, I can't imagine the kind of courage it took for the disciples to do this.

What was stopping them from being arrested or killed?

In a world then, as much as our world now, when society brings about destruction and harm, either from people in power or people in general, it takes a lot of courage to stand up to evil and hate.

It's often easier to stay quiet or remain indifferent, rather than speaking up or acting for the sake of justice.

But when you break the silence, giving even the tiniest bit of effort, it can make a world of difference.

Now, I'm not talking about joining something specific like a resistance march or movement, though you could do that, if that is where your passions lie...

Rather I am talking about the little things in life... The things we do each and every day that enforce faithful resistance through courageous hope by standing up for what is right.

Becoming a driving force in the world by cultivating a way of life that God originally intended... A world filled with justice, grace, and love...

Because if you don't do those things, who will? If not now, when?

In the book of Ephesians, we are called to live as children of the light. Because light produces every kind of goodness, justice and truth.

And light is such a beautiful image for us to embrace and live into...

As light helps things grow...

Light provides warmth especially when the days grow cold.

Light shines into the darkness, and can illuminate a path...Providing hope and a way forward.

And light is not only necessary for life to grow, but light can even be found in places that sunlight cannot reach...

For example, bioluminescent life thrives in the midnight zones of the ocean, lighting up the dark waters in which they swim...

And bioluminescent life also thrives in the deepest, darkest caves where glow worms shine like stars in the night sky...

Nature has found a way to create light, where there is no light, because our Creator knows how important light is...

And while all of this light imagery is beautiful and true, we must also keep in mind, that light takes a considerable amount of energy to produce...

For example, scientist believe that the core of the sun burns at 27 million degrees Fahrenheit... And yet it continues to burn releasing its energy and emitting its light.

And thankfully for us, we don't need to burn nearly as bright as the sun, or as non-stop as the sun...

In fact, when we try to burn non-stop like the sun... We quickly discover... We burn out...

Which is why we have an everlasting light source to fuel us up when we are running on empty... To hold us in warmth when we need rest... To shine in the darkness and not be overcome...

We have Christ, the light of the world.

Who similar to our own sun, not only creates life as we know it on earth... But also, through Him, God creates everlasting life...

Everlasting life found in the everlasting arms of Jesus.

Because Jesus knows how exhausting this world can be...

He knows how hard it can be when we are left waiting in darkness...

Which is why God sent God's only son, to be the light of the world... Shining hope into each and every day...

And not just any hope, courageous hope... The kind of hope that energizes us to follow Christ's illuminated path. By living into faithful resistance, loving those in need, and standing up for what is right...

God longs for this world... God longs for a world that does not repeat the horrific tragedies like we heard about in our gospel today.

Rather God is the force to overcome those powers... By lighting up the world with grace and truth...

Who encourages us to share this light, love, and grace with others.

Which embraces the full spectrum of colors... Through small light waves of kindness, to bold and courageous acts like Christ's disciples displayed today.

However you bring Christ's light into the world, benefits all people...

Even the tiniest bit of light can make all the difference in the world...

Especially to someone who has been waiting in darkness... Who has endured a long and relentless storm...

Like the storms we experienced yesterday... The kind of storms that have the potential to take out the power...

And when the power goes out, we search for a light source...

Like the flashlight on your phone, a candle, or a lighter...

Because that little bit of light may be all you need to weather the storm...

Which is why God calls you to shine Christ's light... However you can... As much as you can...

As Jane Lee Logan said...

"Every smile, every laugh and every bit of kindness, lets a little more light into the world..."

So, let's go and light up the world today... Amen.