



Seeking Love's Light

A Devotional from
First Congregational United Church of Christ
Corvallis, Oregon

We are traveling through an extraordinary time in our nation's history. We are facing a health crisis of epic proportions, a rise in racial tensions and xenophobia that has spilled out into the streets of our cities, an overpowering need for food, medicine and housing for the disenfranchised, the targeting of hatred towards those who do not fit the legacy definition of gender, and the radicalization of politics. We have had to contend with all of these increasingly threatening issues while isolating ourselves in our communities, homes and rooms. We wait for the storms to pass. We wait for the pain to subside. We wait for an answer to rise, like a phoenix from the ashes. We wait for the coming of salvation.

This moment we find ourselves in, mirrors the season of advent. The word "Advent" means "the coming" or "arrival". The season of Advent is a time of waiting, looking forward to and longing for the arrival of the promised one, Jesus. It is a season of anticipation. For many, it is also a time of pain and frustration that the answer has not yet arrived. We are separated from our friends, family, and loved ones. Our hearts ache and our need echoes the petition of the Psalmist in Psalm 85, "Won't you bring us back to life again so that your people can rejoice in you? Show us your faithful love, LORD! Give us your salvation!"

How do we wait? Let us wait together. We can continue on our journey through this season by reading and responding to the same things. This devotional will use a hymn called "Seeking Love's Light" to map our journey. It begins at the start, with the hymn itself. Each day after, we will explore a new reading containing 2 lines of the hymn, as well as a poem and a small piece of scripture. Listen closely and let them sink in. How do you connect to the words, feelings, or story? What are you reminded of? What do you like or dislike, and why? Hold what you're thinking and feeling, gently and sacredly. There is no right or wrong response.

This devotional time is a meditative journey to remind you that you are not alone and that there is an answer coming. We will get there together.

Now may the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD look upon you with mercy and grant you peace.

“Seeking Love’s Light”

Oh my soul, so weak and weary,
Trembling in the darkness deep.
Seek salvation’s light and glory
In Love’s arms, thy soul to keep.

Seek ye not the way that's fleeting,
Quick-release is sin’s domain.
Love is here to heal and free you,
The burden light is yours to claim.

No longer need you bear your burden,
Alone beneath the guilt and shame.
Light revealing love and mercy,
Will wash away the hurt and pain.

Turn thy face from endless sorrow,
Enter into life divine,
There to dwell today, tomorrow,
Ever knowing, "Thou art mine."

Enter into life e'rlasting,
Warm yourself in Love's embrace,
Carried out of death's dark shadow,
To live a life of love and grace.

I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth, I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. - Psalm 89:1-2

“Oh my soul, so weak and weary,
Trembling in the darkness deep.”

On The Brink

I stand at the edge
Astounded at the view.
The chaos stirs
Boiling up at the precipice
And I marvel at my lack of faith,
But you are with me,
Even in this place
Where ambiguity reigns,
And I am comforted
By your presence.
You walk with me,
Your presence a balm,
A morsel of strength
On which I hold tight.
I am surprised
By this table you set
In the midst of these shadows,
The feast of comfort you share.
Your extravagance is
Unrelenting.
Here, your spirit
Enlightens the darkness,
And I know I belong,
Here, with you.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. - Luke 2:10

“Seek salvation’s light and glory,
In Love’s arms, thy soul to keep.”

Open Eyed

I keep watching,
Looking for you
Between the shadows
Amidst the light
Waiting -
I don’t know your name,
Your shape or size,
Your color or sound,
But still, I look,
Waiting -
Waiting in anticipation
For you to arrive,
And knowing, somehow,
That you will come
When the time is right.

Are we there yet?

*Then the LORD came and stood there, calling just as before, “Samuel, Samuel!”
And Samuel said, “Speak. Your servant is listening.” The LORD said to Samuel, “I
am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of all who hear it
tingle! - 1 Samuel 3:10-11*

“Seek ye not the way that's fleeting
Quick-release is sin's domain.”

Unsteady Gaze

What was, no longer is-
The truth of then
Has vanished into yesterday.
Yet it's shadow lingers...
Like a stone thrown in a river,
It's consequence ripples outward,
Onward, unrelentingly.
Blink
And the stone has vanished.
But not its echo.
Not it's echo.
It lingers still,
Repeating,
Like a needle on a
Record scratched,
It lingers,
Repeating,
The patterns that have always been.
Fearful of the furrowed lines,
I tread water, helplessly
Caught up in the current,
Waiting
For the world to change.
But it never does.
It never does.

We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:24-25

“Love is here to heal and free you,
A burden lite is yours to claim.”

This Indigent State

Enough of all this change I see
Flowing down the stream at me,
Grief, loss, and revelation
Yearning for transfiguration.
I fear what comes
What I cannot see.
What will happen,
And become of me?
So I reach for you
In my desperation,
Caught up in this situation,
My aching need
For a steady hand
I beg you Lord, here
With me stand!
Faithful friend, hold on tight
Through the darkness
Of this night,
In your grip let come what may,
In all its flavors, but Lord I pray,
As I step from this shaky ground
Please act quick,
Slow this shit down.

We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. - Romans 8:22-23

“No longer need you bear your burden
Alone beneath the guilt and shame.”

Confession

I lay still, covered in a soft downy blanket
Of complacent privilege,
Watching as the sun rises
Through the smoke of a city on fire.
My cream-colored skin itches,
Irritated by the guilt and the shame,
Not for what I have done,
But by what I have not done,
Remaining silently on the sidelines,
Ignoring your pain.
I cast myself, my closed-eyed inaction
Upon your tender mercy, asking
Not for forgiveness unearned,
But how should I make amends,
Reparations for what I have not done.
Tell me, should I open my mouth
And say what I see, to those who are privileged,
Blessed just like me.
If you ask, I will rise from my safety
And stand wherever beside you,
Or, if you would rather, behind you,
To support your righteous demands.

*For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn and her salvation like a burning
torch. - Isaiah 62:1*

“Light revealing love and mercy,
Washing all the pain away.”

The Journey

The road flows by,
Passing in a mellow drone,
A deep-voiced moan,
As byways and highways
Connect the was and is
And may soon be.
All things blur in motion
Becoming the just passed now
But not yet, the in-between.
Oh, that the middle ground
Was less space
And more substance,
Tangible in firm existence.
Instead, it flickers by
Like a ghostly apparition
Almost seen at the edge of vision,
Waiting for what it does not know.
Purgatory as transition, an in-between
Ever in flux, a temporary reality.
This trail, a well-traveled part way there,
Begins in sorrow but points to hope.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. - Luke 2:15-16

“Turn thy face from endless sorrow,
Enter into life divine.”

A Pleading Manifesto

Let go of fear and be caught up
In the passionate act of seeking,
So that, with empty hands,
The unfolding may be received,
A new piece of the puzzle
To illumine the darkness
With the light of revelation.
Listen to the song of the created world,
Who yearns to be fully known.
All of what she is,
How he works,
How they move,
Sings a glorious song of beauty.
Knock down the door,
The willing naiveté of cognizance,
And welcome a newness of being
That resides in a posture of
Complete surrender to presence.
Beat, push, pound at the boundaries,
The inconsistencies,
The unknowables,
Until all the walls fall down
And our hearts find their release.

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; for those who lived
in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. - Isaiah 9:2*

“There to dwell today, tomorrow
Forever knowing ‘Thou art mine.’”

Together

In the deep, secret garden
Of the heart, and the sweet,
Soft darkness of the soul,
There exist a moment effervescent,
Where-in I lay my weariness
Floating in the softness
Of your embrace.
Like a hand round a cup,
I seek to form my self
About you -
To match the pattern,
And the rhythm,
Of your breaths to mine
So I may deepen the bliss,
This most sacred time,
Of you in me and me in you.
The knowledge of the senses,
The remembrances,
And the in-betweens
Pass softly by,
Until I find
The exquisite truth -
Wisdom is found in
Holding tightly to you.

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,
praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth
peace among those whom he favors!" - Luke 2:13-14*

“Enter into life e'rlasting
Warm yourself in Love's embrace”

Remembrance

The scent of You haunts me.
I feel it in the brush of breeze as I drive,
My hand carried aloft by the rolling air
That gently caresses as it passes by.
I see it in the pools of paint into which I dip my brush
That flows and moves to fill my canvas -
Each movement and stroke
Describing the forms that play in my mind,
And dances outward to lay in beauty.
I taste it in each cup of tea I pour,
As it brushes my lips and surrounds my tongue.
I hear it in the soft gentle chords
That fill each room to hover like a bird in flight,
At wait upon the stirring breeze,
To swoop and fill the silent moments.
I sense it in the words I speak,
The gentle holding, push and pull
Of conversation, the give and take of sharing, but
The scent of You, it haunts me
As the real of You, is not here, but there...
And now I crave, desire to feel
Your breath, Your hand, Your gentle form,
To taste deep the richness of Your spirit
And lay at rest within Your presence.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. - Galatians 4:4-7

“Carried out of death's dark shadow,
To live a life of love and grace.”

Death's Dark Shadow

We have been shackled and bound for far too long
By those who rule in self-proclaimed authority,
Self-indulgently authorized to lay down the Law
Through explicit regulations and expectations
That frame and define the shape and the size
Of who we are, who we should be,
Where God begins, and where God ends.
Their words are oppressive, like death's long shadow.
Cast them out!
Muzzle and subdue them until they gasp their last,
In the death of obsolescence from which they cannot rise.
As the world shakes and ghosts from the past rise,
Fear will come creeping and guilt will come knocking,
Its many hands reaching, clawing, and pleading
For us to return to our chains and submit to their power.
Don't do it, resist!
Sit still and listen in that uncomfortable chaos,
Until you hear the sweet song and see the gentle rising
Of the Allegorical Truth, Undefinable Fullness,
Unconditioned Metaphor, now unchained and released
From the prison of frail wants, selfish expectations,
And overwhelming fears that have kept it chained.
Let the wind speak, the unfixed ethereal move,
To redefine and recreate without sharp edges
Truths shape and form, the all that is us,
Loved, connected, and sacred, as is.

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. John 1:11-14