



“Longing for Light”

Pastor Andy CastroLang

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Scripture (NRSV):

John 1:1-9

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The Word was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word not one thing came into being. What has come into being **4** in the Word was life,^[a] and the life was the light of all people. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. **9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.^[b]

Sermon:

I admit that I am a woman of strong emotions. I have been one of the weepers in my family. I have been known to cry at a Hallmark card, or a good tearjerker commercial for Budweiser (the puppy and the Clydesdale)!

I cry when I am happy and when I am sad.

I laugh out loud.

I shout when I am mad, (but I try not to indulge in that too often!)

I hug and I kiss people.

This is who I am, as a person, and yes, certainly, in the way I fulfill my office of pastor, I bring all of this to my ministry.

So you get hugged, and I laugh with you, and you may see me cry once in a while.

It is especially hard, yet necessary I believe, to share another strong emotion: longing.

The ache, the urgent yet unseen ache that lives within my body, for something I desperately need. Perhaps water, or food, or a loving touch. Perhaps more than that. Perhaps the ache is soul deep.

I long for God.

It is a very personal ache. But I know I am not alone in that longing.

- I long to experience that contentedness that comes with the absolute certainty of God's loving care.
- I long to know God's intention for my life, for this family of faith whom I love, for this planet my beloved home. That is a longing for trust in God.
- I long to be fearless in loving and serving God and God's creation. I am sometimes timid and sometimes afraid. How I long to be fearless.

Mary Luti is a UCC writer and professor, and she recently wrote about that ache, that longing. Most of us are really busy and preoccupied but she assures us all that flashes of longing, and flashes of the end to the longing, in the bliss of communion are there, even for us at our most preoccupied or guarded.

- Maybe it was in a sense of awe and beauty in stargazing one dark night, she writes.
- Maybe it was the moment when you heard the loon sing and you just started to cry and couldn't stop?
- Or when you knew something was missing, felt the ache of the hole in your soul?
- Maybe it was that time when Communion was more than bread and cup and you loved every single person there till your heart was full to overflowing and you didn't even know how it happened?!
- Maybe it was in the beauty of an innocent baby, a tiny creature of sea or land, the delicate design of snow, a glorious picture of a blazing star in the vastness of space?

Perhaps it was music, perhaps it was pain. I believe the experience of longing is in all of us, and comes to us through any and every thing.

And I believe that it has many names, but it is a longing for communion, to be understood and to understand, to love and to be loved, to know and to be known...

We long for God, for God's Light and God's comfort in the myriad sorts of dark and pain that we are burdened to carry.

We long for the promise of restoration, of healing, of harmony and unity.

We long for peace.

We long for the filling of the hole that causes our hearts to ache, our souls to grieve.

John called it waiting for the Life and the Light of the world.

You can call it what you will.

I just know that it is an important longing. It should not be ignored.

I know that it tugs at us, heart and soul and body and mind...and every tug says, "see, God is there, and God is there, and God is there..."

And believe it or not, I think this is a source of deep joy. On this third Sunday of Advent, when we light the candle for Joy, that is what we can celebrate...that God is there, and here, and there, and there. In our silence and in our tears and in our 'aha' moments. God is with us.

The Light shines on us, and in us.

The Light that is the Life of all things, this Light is here for us.

This Light is with us.

Be glad.

Rejoice.

As the prophet Isaiah wrote, "lift up your voice with strength and say to the cities: 'here is your God.'"

Here in the midst of all we have, know, see and experience. God is with us.

Your longing is fulfilled.

Alleluia!