**Jesus’ Light in the Darkness**

**Now we join Jesus on the day of his baptism, the day he started his ministry. He stood in the river Jordan and after he was baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended on him, and the sky opened up. Then a voice from heaven said, “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased.” Immediately after these words were spoken, Jesus was driven into the wilderness to be tested by darkness. The devil tempted him in many ways and throughout his forty days in the desert, Jesus remained faithful to his Father in heaven and to the mission he had been given. We all know he had a difficult task in front of him, because his mission was huge. Bringing the light of the world into consciousness was such a tremendous task that some people couldn’t believe this simple carpenter could be the long- awaited Messiah.**

**Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted by darkness. As a country throughout our history, there have been periods when darkness descended over our land, and our people. We have in many times and in many ways found ourselves suffering through these periods of darkness, just as our savior suffered before us. But we can never forget everything Jesus did when he walked the earth among us was a teaching for us; he was always teaching how to live our lives, how to be Christians. In the desert he never gave into the darkness surrounding him. He endured and he stood strong and represented the great light that darkness can never conquer.**

**Just in the last century our nation endured and lived through the McCarthy Era. But one person had the courage to stand up in the Senate and hold one small candle up until that candle became a flame and overcame the era of darkness brought on by McCarthy. One man in the Senate stood up and addressed McCarthy and said these words, “Senator have you no shame, Senator have you no shame?” With these words the McCarthy era started to crumble.**

**Sometimes other eras of darkness require a lot more work, and in the time of stopping at least some of the major segregation in this country, a great leader had to arise. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a man of God; he was a man who represented the Light of the world. He had the courage and the faith to stand before a huge crowd and tell the many people gathered there, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” This speech was the defining moment helping to propel us in the direction of equality and acceptance for all people.**

**We are now in another era of darkness and the words to love one another get trampled by a man running for president. This man calls all who don’t agree with him losers and often much worse degrading terms. His words and actions are so far away from Christian tenets, my heart aches when I hear his rhetoric. We also have mean-spirited reporters on news shows who claim when President Obama cried over twenty children needlessly killed, that somehow his tears were not real. Ninety percent of the people in this country want a better enforcement of gun registration laws, and yet others find this idea to be an irrational, unnecessary requirement.**

**There is so much darkness surrounding our nation and her people that sometimes it may seem futile to even attempt to counteract it. Yet each time we speak out as Christians against violence of any form, whether it be caused by guns or hurtful words, we are holding up one small candle of light. We follow the prince of peace, the light of the world, the savior who said the greatest commandment was to love one another. We can never succumb to the feeling that our voices don’t make a difference, or that the darkness surrounding us cannot be overcome.**

**John and I recently watched a movie called *Tomorrowland*. It wasn’t the greatest movie but it did have a great premise. The movie was about a time when darkness was taking over the whole earth. The Icebergs were melting and most of the images shown on television were about doom and gloom. So much so people all over the world were simply giving up and feeling nothing could be done. The hero and heroine of the movie decided to find people who were optimists and still believed the world could be saved. They gave the optimistic people special pins to wear. Each one of the optimists knew they could contribute positively to the betterment of all people and to the benefit of the earth.**

**We as Christians are not given special pins to wear. Yet as Christians we are given the faith and the belief in all that is good. We are given every day of our lives opportunities to live into our baptismal vows. Our *Book of Common Prayer* spells out these vows very clearly. Here are some of the words from the ending of the Baptismal service: “O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give usan inquiring and discerning** **heart, the courage to will and to** **persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works... We are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever.”**

**After his baptism Jesus was immediately sent into the wilderness, into darkness. He overcame it and gave us a lesson of persevering through dark times and always remembering the light of the world cannot be overcome. Throughout his life he gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit. All things bringing light are possible through Jesus Christ. May we never forget we are Christians capable of all goodness because Jesus showed us the way to all goodness and through our baptismal vows gave us the gift of bringing wonder and joy into our world.**

**I close with the words we spoke together in the Prayers of the People from *The New Zealand Book of Prayer*: “Lord Jesus, Light of the World, hear our prayers, and make us reflections of your Light, that the places of darkness in our world would be pierced by your Light, and that all nations would be drawn to you and be overwhelmed with joy.” Amen**