

FEBRUARY 4, 2024 FPC PORT HURON PASTOR ROXIE DAVIS (Communion Sunday) SERMON: GOD'S FIRST LIGHT SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1: 1-5, 14-19 Revelation 21: 22-27 (Psalm 139: ; Matthew 6: 22-23)

INTRODUCTION—THE CHOICE OF THE NAME FOR THE CONTEMPORARY

WORSHIP As some of you know, we are into a New Preaching Series for the month of February, "Light in our Darkness." Today we will look at "God's First Light."

In the weeks before today, we have tried to publicize the New Contemporary Worship Service. I am grateful that we have our **musician Price Smith with us**—since he was on vacation in Thailand for the month of January, and got stuck in India—because of some **mechanical** problems with his plane, heading home; and some **political** problems between Canada and India. I am sure that Price Smith can tell you all about it, if you have the time. I am just grateful that Price made it back—And was here to help us worship God, today. through "this" "the" Contemporary Worship.

NAME OF THE CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

Early on in the process of planning for the New Contemporary Service, various leadership committees and staff felt we **needed a name** for the new worship service. Here were the suggested names: Sunrise Celebration, Rise and Shine (reminds me of a camp song). Morning Glory, New Beginnings. Daybreak (too much like the restaurant) First Light, Morning Star.

Everyone involved was polled, and for various reasons, the overall response was "First Light." Of course, I put my two cents in and said: "**First Light--That will preach!**" Because there are lots of "light" Scriptures in the Bible. But actually as I researched the "light" scriptures, I was even more amazed at the number of verses that talk about God's light—Christ' light—and Our Light, shining in the darkness, as we closely follow God in Jesus Christ.

Today the title of the Sermon is "God's First Light" but really the title should have been, "God's First Light and God's Last Light." Because if you go to the first book of the Bible—Genesis and the last book of the Bible Revelation and so many scriptures in between—God's light is the constant—which many times is couched in the language of "Light in the Darkness." As we **read** this morning from Genesis: the very **first act of God in Creation** is the creation of light. The world was formless and darkness

covers the face of the deep. And a wind from God (the Hebrew word is Ruach for wind) which translates as God's Spirit—the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God sweeps over the water—And God speaks, "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw that it was good. Light was called the Day And the Darkness was called the Night. The First Day of Creation! But if you go forward from there, you see on Day 4 of Creation—**EVEN IN the darkness, called Night, God provides light—the Moon—and the Stars.** Even the night—the darkness has light in it.

Genesis 1 describes creation in words of ancient people—what they understood. **They see Creation of the world in layers.** Water under the earth; Earth; Dome in the sky with lights in it; and then Water above the Dome (for rain) They believe the earth is flat. The Creation story is not couched in scientific language.

Even so, the Biblical Creation Story ties into Scientific theory. They are very interconnected. **As my father-in-law, Tom Davis,** a man who lived until he was 98 A brilliant Scientist—and a University Professor of Chemistry. **He said,** "You can go so far with Science and Then you meet who is behind it all, God Himself."

Light—God's Light was in the Beginning. But it will also be in the End.

The **Book of Revelation, describing the end of time,** which we read from this morning, is filled with prophecy and visions and symbolic beings that refer back to the Old Testament, which the writer, probably Jesus' Disciple John, hopes his Jewish reader have some sort of grasp of the Old Testament images to which he refers. One gets near the end of the Book of Revelation and there we have the **"end-of -time vision."** where John, the author of the book, is taken into the Holy City of God—called the New Jerusalem. **There is no Temple in the Holy City. The Lord God the Almighty and The Lamb (image of Jesus) IS the temple and the City has no need of sun or moon. For the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb.** There is no night—no darkness there. And the nations—the peoples of the earth—will **walk by its light.**

SEEING THE LIGHT

In my 40 some years in the ministry, there have been several times when I have been at the bedside of someone dying and they tell me and then ask me, "I see the Light. Do you see the Light? Then they exclaim, "It is so bright." Here is what I think: First Light, Last Light—Light in the in-between—All harkens back to **Psalm 139: 11- 12 where the Psalmist says:** "If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and

the light around me become night.” Even the darkness is not dark to You, oh God; The night is as bright as the day, **for darkness is as light to You, O Lord.**

A QUESTION FOR ALL OF YOU

How many of you have been in a place where It is pitch dark. No light—A cave; A room; A sanctuary; A deep hole. A forest, where you cannot see the moon and you cannot see the stars, because of the cloud covering. In the darkness, your eyes adjust. But you are constantly searching for the light but there is none - Just Darkness.

MY EXPERIENCE—CALAMIGOS RANCH

Some of you know that my bachelor’s degree Is in **Recreation**—Yea, I know you think that I played games throughout my college years. That is partially right. But my Degree in Recreation got me some really good jobs in my early years. I was the Girls Recreation Supervisor at a male/female summer camp called: Calamigos Star C Ranch, near Malibu, California. Yes, we had horses and archery; and swimming, going to the beach; hiking and campfires. Lots of learning about different sports.

I know you probably think that I had a pretty **posh** job, being near Malibu. Don’t get me wrong. I loved my work. But **Posh??** Think again, if you spent the whole summer with kids whom their parents had sent them to camp for a week or several weeks or the whole summer. Planning recreation activities for kids who had seen a lot, done a lot and had a lot, **it was a real challenge.**

And one of the activities that was especially popular with the older kids, They loved the “Night Hikes,” Me—not so much. It was dark—with very little light or no light, the Night Hikes were on those nights when the Moon was no more than a sliver; the clouds covered the stars; the terrain was dense with vegetation. It was dark when we would start hiking. You had to be careful because you didn’t have a flashlight and you had to find your way.

At least, you had to find your way, until the Head Recreation Leader, my boss, would turn on his flashlight—The only light visible and available—and you would try to focus on his light which would bath the path ahead-Giving light so you didn’t stumble or fall or make a fool of yourself. And for me, **with the flashlight**, it wasn’t so dark or unnerving. And of course, **there was always a lesson.** at least, for those of us, who believed in the reality and the light of God. **You see, when we allow Jesus to be the leader of Life’s Hikes,** Jesus’ promises comes true. It is Jesus who says to all of us:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will **NEVER** walk in darkness, but will have the **Light of Life.**” (John 8: 12) **Really Jesus becomes our flashlight in the Darkness on the Hike of Life.**

ENDING THE SACRAMENT

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion—Which we celebrate today, **God’s light shines into our darkness—God’s light shines forth in Jesus’ love for us.** And that Light of Love is expressed every time we share communion with each other and with our Lord. For in remembering that Jesus died on the cross (**extreme darkness**)—we come to realize: **God’s great love for us is the light that shines in our darkness—**the darkness that WE create and OTHERS create. **Jesus goes into the Darkness of the Cross, so that we might see God’s Light of Love, And Allow Ourselves to be led by it.** Just as it says in **Psalm 119: verse 105 (yes, Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm in the Bible: 176 verses),** in the midst of the lamenting of the Psalmist about the **darkness in which he dwells,** he says with confidence and boldness, **“O God, Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”** **May we never forget who provides the Light in our Darkness—**God is the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End—The Light that began the world, will be there in the End, **And in all the places in-between.**