

**The Reverend Marjo Anderson**

**Pentecost 3  
1 John 1.1-2.4, John 1.1-18**

**13 June 2021  
Salem, Bridgeport**

**“Once Aware, Declare, and Share”**

So your supply preacher from last week told me that the theme was sharing your faith  
and that you were given homework to do.

And so I thought today we would follow up on that theme with these verses from First letter of John:

*“... We declare to you what we have seen and heard  
so that you may be brought into relationship with us  
and thereby into relationship with God made known in Jesus Christ...  
so that our joy may be complete...”*

That’s as much as I had decided by Wednesday night.

Now on Wednesday I had a day that was just filled to overflowing  
with an awareness of God’s presence in my life.

When I got to the end of the day

and it came time to write down 10 things for which I was grateful in my daily gratitude journal,

I couldn’t stop at 10 but went on to 20! – and I could’ve gone even farther but I decided it was time for bed.

Then Thursday morning I woke up and it was like Wednesday had never happened.

I wasn’t exactly depressed, but I was no longer on the top of the world.

I felt down and discouraged and full of doubt.

And then I felt guilty for feeling that way.

I have been filled with the Spirit,

I have seen signs and wonders and miracles,

my heart has been overflowing with joy and gladness, so why was I feeling so down?

Why did every high day seem to be followed by a low one? What was wrong with me?

Well there was no time to do dwell on it. I needed to get the bulletin to Karl.

I looked up in the Revised Common Lectionary the passage from First John

to see how much was normally included.

It went from First John 1.1-2.2, talking about darkness and light.

And then that immediately called to mind the first chapter of John which we could also read.

Yes, we would use those two scriptures.

Bulletin finished, I went out to walk and write my sermon.

And as I was reflecting on those two scripture passages they brought to mind a third:

the first creation story in Genesis:

In the beginning there was darkness & into that darkness God spoke light.

And it suddenly dawned on me (“dawned”! Get it?!)...

It suddenly dawned on me that God did not REPLACE the darkness with light;

God simply brought light INTO the darkness.

In other words there was still darkness as well as light; there was day but there still was night.

And night followed day and day followed night.

Of course!

Because we live in a world of dualities.

We would not know what light was without darkness, day without night,  
faith without doubt, joy without sorrow, life without death.  
And just as there will always be both night and day out there,  
so there will always be both night and day in here (point to heart).

When it is day in my soul, when I'm filled with light, when I can see God and hear God and feel God's touch,  
when my heart is overflowing with joy and gladness,  
when I am bursting with abundant life,  
then it is EASY to do what our scripture says.

I don't even have to try to declare what God has done - in fact I can't keep it to myself. I have to share it!

But what do we do at those times when it is night in our souls, when darkness fills us,  
when we can't see God or hear God or feel God's touch,  
when our minds are filled with fear and doubt, and our hearts hurt with grief and pain?  
What do we do then?

Let me suggest 4 things.

1. Pray.

The hymn reminds us,

“What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!

Scripture says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord and he will sustain you”

Or think of the psalms.

Many are attributed to King David,

the greatest king Israel ever had, the man with the most power, the most fame, the most wealth.  
He had everything!

And yet time and time again he cries out to God in pain and grief and anger and fear.

Many of the psalms start out in the place of darkness and despair and doubt, \*

but as the psalm continues it's as if the night is swallowed up by day  
as dawn appears to lighten the writer's world

and the psalms end on a note of hope as faith is restored and joy returns.

Sometimes the mere act of pouring your heart out to God makes room for God's grace to flow in.

So pray, and...

2. Read scripture.

Not sure what passage to read?

Well Google it!

Bible passages in times of grief, Bible passages in times of doubt, or Bible passages for the depressed...

Or take any Bible story and think about what the character went through.

Don't focus on the end of the story, but focus on the beginning or on the middle.

Abraham was given an amazing vision

but to obtain the promise he had to start out on a faith journey at the age of 75.

Imagine the difficulties, the challenges, the obstacles.

Imagine the exhausting trip and the fears and doubts and hopelessness along the way.

Realize that Abraham's story has gone from day to night just as your story has.

Then think about the end of the story

where the promise is fulfilled and there is at long last overwhelming joy and gladness,  
and realize that night has turned into day.

And so your night will turn into day again too.

So pray to God, listen to God's Word, and...

3. Talk with a prayer partner or a faith partner or a spiritual partner.

What I mean is someone who doesn't just listen to the surface level of what's happening in your life and respond to the physical or psychological or emotional situation but to the spiritual.

Someone with whom you can talk about where God is in the midst of whatever is happening.

I hope you have someone like that in your life, but if you don't, feel free to call me,

because there is nothing I find more meaningful than talking about what God is doing in our lives.

So pray to God, listen to God, talk with a faith partner, and

4. When your night has turned back into day, when light has come into your darkness,  
when you once again can see God and hear God and feel God's touch, then declare it.

Over and over in the psalms the author writes,

"And when you answer, God, I will tell it to the assembly,

I will praise you in the midst of the congregation.

You see, when God acts, when God answers our prayers, when God turns our mourning into dancing,  
God deserves our thanks and praise.

We must do more than think inside our heads, "Thank you, God!"

We must say the words aloud.

And we must do more than speak them aloud to an empty room.

We need to share with others what God has done for us.

God deserves that kind of appreciation and that kind of recognition.

God deserves that public honor and blessing and glory.

And others deserve to know about the God who had so blessed us.

They deserve to know how truly powerful and loving our God is.

They deserve to experience the same signs and wonders and miracles that we've experienced.

If it is daytime inside of you, if the light inside has allowed you to see God and hear God and feel God's touch,  
tell somebody.

Tell somebody today.

And if it is night inside you and you can't see God or hear God or find God,

know that day will follow the night, and the light will come into the darkness.

In the meantime, your prayers, your reading of scripture,

and your talking with a friend about where God might be in whatever is going on –

those things will be the stars in the night that will keep hope alive until dawn arrives.

And when day returns and you once again find God, then it will be time once again “

*“...to declare what you have seen and heard so that others may be brought into relationship with God.*

*And as you do that, your joy will be complete...”*

Once Aware, Declare, and Share.

Will you pray with me?

God, we lift up to you those who are battling the dark night of the soul,

those who are experiencing discouragement, despair, or doubt,

those who bound by addictions and compulsions,

those who are worn down by failure and fear.

Bring the light of moon and stars into their time of darkness

until daylight dawns once more inside their spirits.

God, we thank you for those who have been brought out of darkness into the light,

those who now live in the day instead of the night,

those who have had chains broken and prison doors opened,

those who have been set free to step into their healing, their freedom, their peace.

God, let us see you and hear you and feel your touch, and overwhelmed by what have experienced,

may we declare with our lips who you are

that others might come to know you and that our joy might be complete!

Make us aware that we might declare and share!

We pray this in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Spirit. Amen and Amen and Amen