

Sometimes we get it wrong. The prophet Isaiah names it clearly, you who call evil good and good evil, darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter sweet and sweet bitter. Sometimes we do indeed get it wrong. But how do we tell the difference? I hear all the time that the Bible is hard to read and understand. And sometimes it really doesn't make sense, especially when we do not have the whole context and timing of what happened when. Even though I have a seminary degree, I don't know everything and often have to look it up. But even when we do have all the "fact so to speak" we still may not fully understand.

So how do we see clearly what scripture is teaching us? In seminary for scripture & preaching classes, we learned a fancy word for just that – it's called hermeneutic. Put in lay terms – lens – what lens are you looking at the text through? Think about it terms of putting on your glasses to see. The lens we use is love. The Pharisees, trying to trick Jesus, asked what the most important commandment was? Jesus, said to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength and the second was like that, love your neighbor as yourself. He goes on to say all 613 laws in the Old Testament stem from either love of God or love of neighbor.

So how does it work? When we speak are our words showing the love of God or neighbor? If they don't then we are doing exactly what the prophet Isaiah is talking about. And we all do it to some degree or another. I could say that chocolate cake is the best dessert ever. And while it might be true for me, it is not true for everyone. I have family members I love who hate chocolate. I have friends who are allergic to chocolate. Serving only chocolate cake to either of them would not be loving. Now this does

not mean we have to have multiple options for everything to make everyone happy. I could say, that I like chocolate cake, without declaring it is the best ever. And if my family and friends who can't eat chocolate, a loving option would be to have an alternative.

So what does chocolate cake really have to do with light shining? Putting our thoughts and actions within the frame of love as we speak, act and think, Christ's light is shining through us. Take a minute and think of how someone has shown you love this week? Do you have it in your mind? Was it something extraordinary or something ordinary? I've seen it so many times with the people of Faith. It is in checking in with each other. It is in the working together. It is in providing opportunities for families to gather. It is in the pumpkin patch, plum pudding, and flowering the cross. It is in thanking each other, praying for each other and offering forgiveness to each other.

It only takes a spark, to get a fire going. The light can shine, even in the darkness with just one small word or action. Now imagine if everyone who is related to just our church did 1 thing. And then those who experienced it, did the same. We've doubled our effect with just one person. It's like paying it forward in the drive-thru. You may have seen the bumper sticker that says practice random acts of kindness. And I mostly agree, as people of Faith it is not random, it's living our faith. As we make our way in this time of advent, may we be known for the light of Christ shining in and through us so others may see that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.