

The prophet Isaiah is celebrating the end of a rough time. They hard times are behind them and he, along with the community are celebrating. Military & political dangers are behind them and there is a new baby to boot! Who doesn't like to celebrate the good times? New babies, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, new pets, new jobs, the holidays. There is a lot to celebrate in life. We know that when times have been difficult, it is even more important to celebrate the good stuff!

And as much as Isaiah is celebrating, he is also acknowledging the pain that they have all been through. Darkness is something that we all experience. Biblical scholars have written about darkness for Isaiah is a metaphor for death & depression. A day doesn't go by in our lives where we don't hear of someone dying. Whether the a person's death affects us or not is generally only a matter of finding a connection. And while we talk about death, we do not talk about depression.

Depression is not just sadness. Depression is something that can wreck havoc in individuals and families. Our brains are amazing things but sometimes, when they are not functioning as designed, for whatever reason, our brains can lie to us. They can tell us that no one loves us or that we aren't good enough. Our brains can tell us that we do not matter enough to keep on living. And while it is our brain saying that it is wrong.

This passage from the prophet Isaiah is not about positive thinking. Instead it is sharing wisdom that on the other side of the darkness, death, depression that the light shines. Because as long as we do not give up, the light shines, we just have to keep moving towards the light. To persevere. And it is hard. But that is not the end of the good news.

From John we moving from hearing about the light that is coming in Christ to hearing about someone who has not only seen the light but knows the light and can help us find the light. John, son of Elizabeth & Zechariah, nephew of Mary and cousin of Jesus knows about miracles and the nature of being the church. John is a PK – a priest's son. John knows truth and beauty, darkness and beauty. His entire life and ministry is completely about pointing to the light, the light for all people.

And we are to be just like John. Too often we get it backwards, we ask ourselves what Jesus would do. And while it is noble to ask it and emulate it we cannot ever be entirely like Jesus. Instead, we need to be like John. We need to make sure that as we tell the story of God, the story of us that

we are always and continually pointing to the true light, Jesus. We are serve as witnesses and that means that all that we do, good and not so good tell others about Jesus.

I have often said that people are the greatest stumbling block to faith. How many times have we heard or experienced pain, judgment, anger, hostility in the church or from people who profess faith in Jesus Christ? It's hard when we are to be the witness of the light of the world, because sometimes we don't live up to that expectation.

But the good news is that we don't have to be perfect but we do need to remember who we are and whose we are. We are the chosen, loved and called children of God. We are not just bearers of the light in the world but that our lives are to show others the way. Our pain and darkness can be shared, to others so they may know the way of light.

I remember in those painful nights of new parenthood, when all we wanted was 3 hours of uninterrupted of sleep, the words from parents a few years ahead who promised it would get better. I remember in those awful days of potty training, kind teachers reminding us that everyone figures it out. I remember the kindness of those who have gone before us in faith, telling us that this too shall pass. The words are not platitudes but rather the good news that they've been down this road.

A man walking down the street falls into a hole. He calls out and sees a doctor and asks for help, the dr writes a prescription and tosses it down into the hole. Another person passes and says sorry I can't help. Another person walks by and jumps in. The man who had been in the hole said, why did you do that, now were both stuck. The second man smiled and said, no, I've been down here before and know the way out. May our lives serve to encourage others in their own, not because we're perfect but because we've made it through and will continue to witness to the light. As we make our way in this time of advent, may we be known for the witness the light of Christ 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.