

LIGHT IN THE SHADOW OF COVID-19 by Mick Chase

Greetings to all who serve at Union and to all who read this message. Psalm 104 paints a picture of the God we serve to be clothed with splendor and majesty. He wraps Himself in light as with a garment. He makes winds His messengers, flames of fire His servants.

Shall we question ourselves; “How bright is His light, His flame of fire in me, His servant, today?” I don’t often like to face the answer as I consider my ways and thoughts. An unbiased observer might offer a merciful opinion; “More like a flame-out it seems to me!”

Looking into God’s mirror (James 1:23,24) and NOT forgetting what you see is not really much fun. It is more convenient to maybe shudder, turn away, and forget. God’s mirror will cast bright light on all sorts of junk and dust and clutter unless we slink away, back to our own ways, the easy path of self. The Big Me or perhaps, the B.M. of my life.

Dying to self is not a pleasant walk in the park! It requires and demands vigilance, obedience, diligence, persistence and, for sure, self-control. Nevertheless, this is the path to victory, to being a carrier of light, a flame of fire.

The title of this message was borrowed in part from the title of a book, “Light in the Shadow of Jihad” written by Ravi Zacharias. Ravi is an acclaimed theologian and Christian apologist. He and C.S. Lewis are high on my list of favorites when it comes to apologetics and Christian topics.

Apologetics is NOT the same as apologizing for whatever. We have no reason to apologize for Jesus and His light in our lives as Christians. The one exception would be when our behavior displays the fruit of our self-serving ways instead of the fruit of His spirit, His light.

My personal explanation or definition of Christian apologetics comes from the Bible. 1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. Yes, each of us is called to be a Christian warrior, a defender of the faith.

Christian apologetics is about seeing things God’s way. This is meant to be lived out in each of our lives day by day where the world around us can see the light of God’s truth. Our personal expression of this life and light in our eyes and demeanor is, in large, kind of like an open book revealing what makes us tick. People see this and respond or interpret what they experience when they interact with us.

The title of this message, Light in the Shadow of COVID-19 can be seen in words from scripture found in Isaiah 9:2. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. Matthew referred to this scripture revealing Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy. You can read this in Matthew 5:14-16.

Since the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden we have all lived and traveled under the shadow of death. No matter whether we choose to accept or believe it, we will die. We are mortal. This refers to our physical bodies.

C.S. Lewis referred to this world and wherever people dwell as the shadowlands. We who inhabit this earth, this land of the shadow of death often flounder, or if my age, totter around oblivious to the light that God sent to us in the person of Jesus, the Christ. Folks flat out don’t usually like talking or thinking about the fact that we are going to die someday. Oh, we know it will happen but it’s just not a very comfortable subject.

COVID-19 has made these shadowlands even darker, murkier than even before. An undercurrent of fear, despair and depression assaults our minds and senses. A background of worry and

frenetic activity compete to capture and embroil our thoughts and emotions to further dim our light with the distractions and cares of this world. Our being offended and our vociferous opinions and convictions concerning all that comes with this pandemic does not, will not, bring peace or contentment or joy to anyone. Our burning anger and judgement about things will lead no one to eternal life and light. We must guard our hearts and minds in this time of trial and testing.

I am reminded of a warning from God's word; 1 Peter 5:8,9 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. Our own lack of vigilance makes us prone to be prey. We are personally responsible to keep our light of hope shining and to not be overcome. I thank Betty Joan for a new prayer; "Help me Lord to get this leash back into Your hands!"

So, what answer are you to give should someone ask why you live in hope? Please know that a memorized speech or prepared oration will, most likely, come across as stilted or stale. Folks pick up on this quickly and will not really hear your spiel. They will probably just wish you would go away, even if they don't tell you so. The idea is not to put people to sleep but that they awaken to life and light.

I usually reply that I am a Jesus person and see where it goes from there. Meanwhile I am praying (not aloud) "Jesus, please help me here! Please open this person's eyes and ears and heart!" Those asking the question need to see the experience of Jesus in your life. Keep it simple! Make sure you LISTEN to what the person wants to say or ask. Allow them to speak! When you cultivate a history of spending time with God, the Holy Spirit will give you the wit to answer and the wisdom to listen. This is not about churchiness; it is about Jesus!

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

As I finish this continuing message, the chorus of the song, Saviour King by Hillsong runs through my heart as a prayer:

We love you Lord, we worship you
You are our God, you alone are good
Let now your church shine as the bride
That you soar in your heart as you offered up your life
Let now the lost be welcomed home
By the saved and redeemed those adopted as your own
Let now our hearts burn with a flame
A fire consuming all for your Son's holy name
And with the heavens we declare
You are our king