



Advent Reflection for Thursday, December 9

Missy Trull

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

John 12:35-36

Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

I was recently in the hospital (I am a Chaplain), talking with a patient who went through a particularly distressing bone marrow transplant, which was ultimately intended to alter his white blood cell count. After several weeks, the transplant seemed to accomplish absolutely nothing. His numbers were the same. The life-saving procedure may prove useless to his recovery. And he is stuck in the hospital for a long time, waiting, with no clear idea of what hope of recovery he is waiting for. As we spoke, he shared his anger, rage even, at how meaningless the hourly medication and therapy regimen he is on feels. What does it matter if nothing is going to work? As he was expressing his anger, he shared, "you know, it's the small stuff you miss. Not the big stuff. The small stuff." I asked him about the small stuff, and he shared with me a world of light—sunshine on the beach, playing softball; the way the old couch sinks in; your kid in the backseat of the car, sleeping; the warmth of the living room. As he shared, I felt the hospital room fill up with all these scenes from his life, meaning scenes, scenes of light, of sacred life, of small sacred life.

In his state of anger and pain, my patient discerns an incredible piece of wisdom—the light, the goodness of life, the stuff you miss--it's the small stuff. When I read our passage for today, it took everything in me not to open a bible and try to think critically about what the text is really saying. It's a poetic sounding text, but I also found it really confusing. I wanted to understand. But I determined not to think. I decided to feel my way through the text and, as I did so, I remembered this man, my patient. I remembered the darkness and emotional weight I felt in his room. And I remembered how the darkness lifted, just a bit, as he spoke about softball. I hear my patient's wisdom "it's the small stuff" in Jesus' tender guidance, "While you have the light, believe in the light." There is light in the small stuff, there is deep, abiding light in the small things in life if only we can have the presence of spirit to really take it in, to really see and cherish the light.

Jesus is unashamed about darkness—it is coming, it is here. The darkness isn't a possibility, it is a fact. In the text, Jesus asks his disciples to cherish the light, to really take the light in, so that when the darkness comes, his friends will have already integrated the light into their very selves. Now, in this text, I think Jesus was probably talking about himself—he is the light, and soon he will leave them. He is asking them to take full opportunity of his current presence. But I think the spirit of this message rings true to us in the daily, small ways Jesus, the Light of the world, calls for our attention, our presence, our wonder.

And, I love the shift in the text that you can go from having the light to becoming children of light. I find this to be so true. The light changes us. We begin by noticing the light, again and again and again, and then maybe creating the light. This practice begins to integrate into our very spirits and beings. We can become the light we see around us if we really can take it in.

I don't know what will happen to my patient. But I know that if he can play softball on the beach again he will experience the fullness of light and beauty and goodness of that moment. He has become the child of that story of light. And until that day, I hope the memory of the light carries him through.

So may we notice the beauty and light in the small things around us. And may we cultivate spirits of presence, so that when the darkness comes, we can continue walking in the light.

Missy attends Holy Apostles with her husband, Matt, and, when attending virtually, Chauncey, their dog, comes too! She loves Holy Apostles and is so grateful to be a part of this community. She is a chaplain at New York Presbyterian Hospital, enjoys reading and running, and has recently started making candles. She wishes all of you a meaningful Advent season.

