

12-25-17 – Christmas Eve Meditation: John 1:1-5

My friend David is a folk singer, and a few years ago, he wrote a song based on the quote from St. Francis of Assisi that you'll see at the top of your bulletin: "All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of one single candle."

It's true, isn't it? You can light a candle in a dark room, or under a dark sky, and no matter how big or vast that darkness is, it can never make the light disappear. Zoom out on the picture and that little light may grow smaller and smaller against the deep darkness, but the flame is still there, burning. As great and formidable as it may appear, the darkness is powerless to stop that flame from burning.

We who live in this world are no strangers to darkness. The darkness of poverty, homelessness, racism. Of climate change, cancer, and car-accidents. The darkness of addiction, bullying, and depression. Of grief, loneliness, and estrangement from loved ones. Our world may be running low on some natural resources, but as it turns out, there is no shortage of darkness.

This Advent, week by week, we have come together to light candles for hope, peace, joy, and love. And even as we light these candles, it can be hard not to let the cynical voices of the world creep in. Hope sounds great, but what if it disappoints us? Peace is sweet, but based on recent headlines, seems fleeting at best. Joy? Well, that's the goal, but studies say we are an increasingly *discontented* society. And love? Well, many days it's easier to find love on a Hallmark card than in our interactions with one another.

These songs about shepherds and angels and babies in mangers, they're beautiful and sentimental, but doesn't it seem somewhat futile to sing songs about light when we're surrounded by darkness?

Unless. Unless, perhaps, that is the whole point. That the reason we gather this night is because the darkness of the world is about to be broken open by the birth of one little child. That just like a candle burning against the darkest night, the birth of Jesus Christ ignites a flame that the darkness cannot put out.

In my friend David's song, he sings the following verse:

"You can say love is a powerless tool; That the real world is heartless, and that hope is for fools; But I've watched the sunrise, and the truth is I've found; It's not light that is fragile; it's the other way 'round. And all the darkness in the world can't extinguish the light of just one candle."

"The light shines in the darkness," we read in the Gospel according to John, "And the darkness did not overcome it."

Tonight, friends, we are invited practice being Christians in the dark. To strike our matches and simply let them burn. We light candles against the darkness, we let our own light shine, declaring to any powers of evil, pain, and oppression that no darkness can put us out. We welcome the birth of Christ by shining our lights in the darkness, proclaiming the good news that the Word has become flesh and made his home among us, bringing life and light to all people. And that light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it.

"You," Jesus said, "are the light of the world."

So let us shine brightly. Amen.