**Walking in the Light**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

Acts 4: 32-35 1 John 1: 1- 2:2 John 20 :19-31

**Summary:** To “walk in the light” is a call, not only to holiness, but also to visibility.

A few weeks ago, I surprised no one by admitting a certain familiarity, even expertise, with the experience of change. It came to me, as I studied the scriptures for this week, that I might also have some unique insights about walking in the light and in the dark. As John plainly knows, God is light and there is no darkness there. We usually take this to mean God is holy and good, making light a metaphor for good and darkness a metaphor for sin. However apt that may be, I think John might also be saying something about visibility here. Let me illustrate.

It is one of the great ironies of my life, and of people like me, that I was least visible and most dishonest when I was living and behaving in accord with the expectations of the important people in my life. The actual me was hidden, invisible, in darkness. When I was most honest and walked in the light, my visibility could be taken as a lie. This sounds frustrating because it was. It even sounds tragic sounds tragic; maybe, but it could sometimes be unexpectedly funny.

For example, I was asked a few years ago to officiate at the wedding of a friend with whom I had gone to college. This would be a same sex marriage; so, she needed a minister whose theology would not hinder this. Neither I nor my denomination has a problem with this. So, I counseled and worked with the couple on wedding vows and worship plans by e-mail. Then, I traveled to Winslow, Maine, with my husband to perform the ceremony between my old friend Marlene Lane and Jan Lightfoot. It still gives me joy to recall announcing the couple’s blended surname: “Marlene and Jan Lightfoot-Lane!”

Not surprisingly, a lot of people who were my classmates at the University of Maine at Farmington were guests at the wedding and reception. Marlene had told most of them that I’d graduated with her, been ordained, and gotten married to my husband, Jaime Stewart, in the interim between then and now. I should have anticipated it, but I still got a sinking feeling when a classmate came up to me and confessed, “I just can’t remember you from our time at UMF.”

“O dear,” I thought, “Lots of people change over the years, but I’ve changed more than most!”

I swallowed and prepared for “the reveal.” I had the rather grim realization that I was about to, at least metaphorically, step into the light. “Do you remember,” I began, that tall guy who acted in “Once Upon a Mattress” with Marlene? You know, *Alfie O’Donnell*? Well, my maiden name was O’Donnell, and . . .”

I was ready to go on and say, “That was me.” However, at this point, her whole face lit up with what I was sure was the light of invoked memory and she interrupted me, saying: “Oh yes! Of course! Now, I remember both you and your brother!”

Maybe I should have clarified further, but I just smiled, said “That’s great!” I sat back down with my husband and lots of giggling friends who knew my full journey. Maybe I’d walked in the light more fully than I had suspected, especially on the weekends when I didn’t have to pretend for classes and went as myself to movies, dances, the local, pizza hangout, or with a date to the local couples’ gazebo. Oddly, no one ever saw me and my brother together.

Well, one of my greatest blessings is to be so fully known and fully accepted here at Gaines UCC. It is like the psalm: “How good and pleasant it is when brethren dwell in unity.” It really is like sacred, healing, anointing oil and echoes the gift of Salvation. It is like being in the dark and having the light shine on you – which, of course, is both liberating and scary. That’s why the Bethlehem star carol sings, “the hopes and fears of all the years is born in thee tonight.”

Finally, it is this visibility of God in Christ that Thomas experiences when Jesus appears again behind the locked doors just to make sure he isn’t left out. He was told about the Resurrection, but he needed to see and touch for himself to believe it was real. God is light, and there is no darkness at all in Him. God is not hidden. We see God in the stories of the Bible, in Creation, in Jesus, and in each other.

So, this is a sermon to encourage everyone to take a deep breath and do the big reveal. Reveal God. Let people see what God is doing in you. When they touch your hands, let them touch Jesus’ hands. When they sit by your side, let them sit with you by His side, insomuch as you are one in Him, as He prayed you would be. Remember that He promised that those folks you forgive will be forgiven. So, forgive, lest His authority not enter the world as light through you. Blessed are you who believe and walk in His light without seeing and touching to the extent Thomas needed. Blessed are those who walk in the light with God. Amen, church?