

“Living in the Light”

by Linda Gooley
Sunday, July 29, 2018

Good Morning, 1 John 1:5-2:2 John 1:14-16

Our scriptures tell us to live in the light. That God is light and we all are a part of that light.

We **all** want to live in God’s light. When we are living in the light we feel good, happy, joyful. We all want to feel good. We all want to live with joy. None of us wants to live in negativity. Negativity **could** be considered a sin. We all **want** to be positive, uplifting individuals with the purpose of living in God’s wonderful light.

Easy to say. Difficult to do!

Last month Pastor Greg said that “we are called to be happy”. I think that is really our only job here on earth. To be happy. Because if you aren’t happy you aren’t living in the light.

So if we are called to be happy then truly **that’s our job**. We were born into this body here on earth to have joy and be happy. In order to be happy and have joy you **have** to live in God’s light. So if our main job is to be happy through God’s light, well, COOL!! I want to be happy, joyful, lightful. Who doesn’t?

But sometimes it isn’t so easy to be happy, joyful, lightful.

I know I have a great deal of trouble keeping joy in my daily life. I wake up in the morning and I’m sure that today is the day I’m going to make it through the day, living in God’s light, Ok at least past breakfast. **Because that’s my job**. No negative thoughts (because that wouldn’t be living in the light). So, in order to get to a level of joyfulness I think about all the things I’m grateful for. Now, that’s not hard. I have many things to be grateful for. My loving family, my beautiful home, my wonderful church family, my health. That part is easy. I can always find something to be grateful for and then I’m usually feeling happier and lighter as I begin my day fulfilling the scriptures that we are meant to be joyful.

I’m sure we all **try** to get through the day with joy and light or at least would like to. But the problem is that we have other people in our lives. And conflicts and negative things do come up. Some of the people we know aren’t so.... lightful.

Our wonderful, adorable children even though we love them so much can sometimes not be so lightful either.

Sometimes when we get together with friends we hear about everybody’s troubles. Trouble with kids, trouble at work, furnace went out at home, gas prices are going up. And as we get older it seems to be more and more about shoulder surgeries, heart problems, joint replacements, doctor appointments and medications.

So how do we stay in God’s light and stay joyful and positive.

Well, that's easy. Never talk to other people, never leave the house, don't ever, ever listen to the news and give your children away. Well, I guess that's one way. But defiantly not the way I would like to live my life.

How do we really stay in the light with all of these distractions? How about just through practice.

We talk about practicing Jews, or practicing Catholics. You don't very often hear about practicing Congregationalists or practicing UCCers. But I think that's what it takes. If you practice living in the light every day eventually you will be that ray of light that when negative people and situations occurs you cannot only withstand the onslaught but you can be a useful, helpful, listening ear.

Ok so how do you practice? Well, there's a little game that Mary Lou and play. No matter where we are if we are feeling down or even if we are feeling great and just want to milk that feeling even more. We look around and find what we like about where we are. For instance right now

I love that all of you took the time to come to church
today.

I love that the people who decided on our padded seats
took the time to consider our comfort

I love that we have fans on a hot day.

I love the beautiful stained glass windows that tell a story.

Anybody here have anything that makes you feel good about where you are right now?

Now do you maybe feel a little lighter than you did a few minutes ago? Can you feel it in your soul? It's very lovely to be in a place and look for the beauty rather than the faults. Same goes for situations, like the one we have here at church.

Pastor Greg has gone, we are getting a **part time** bridge pastor. And to top it all off we are probably looking for a **part time** (duo vocational) settled pastor. So now it is up to us how we react to this news.

Thoughts **could** to go to things like "How is our church ever going to survive all of this change" "how are we going to function with a part time Pastor". But this kind of thinking is negative and not living in the light. So how do we know it's not living in the light? By our emotions. How we are feeling inside. If we aren't feeling so good, we are out of the light. When we are feeling great, we're in the light. So what can we do. We can practice by finding a better feeling thought. We can think "fortunately we have a strong, living in the light church with many talented, willing people who can pick up the slack while we learn to live into our new reality." That would make us feel better inside and feel more lightful.

It's always possible to find a better feeling thought. You just have to practice. First by recognizing when you aren't feeling so great. So by paying attention to how you are feeling you can tell if you are living in the light. Remember! If you are feeling not so good, then you know you are not feeling the light. When you are feeling good you know the light is pouring down and surrounding you. If something is bothering you, turn away from it and find a better feeling thought. Practice!

Ok, I know conflicts do come up and have to be dealt with life isn't all wonderful but you create your own reality. You decide how you are going to feel in any given situation so for the most part try to go with that happy thought. Did you know that there are over 800 happy texts in the Bible.

Do you think God might be trying to tell us something? With a little practice or maybe a lot of practice it is possible to stay in the light and be joyful and happy most of the time.

As far as this church goes. Yes, it kind of feels like we have taken a lot of hits lately. We lost our beloved Nicolette. Now we have lost our interim because of financial reasons. But we are UCC, in fact we are First Congregational Grand Ledge UCC we are a mighty and positive and strong and awesome group of people that can stay positive and live in the light no matter what. I know that for a fact because I have been here for 11 years and have witnessed it first-hand. It doesn't matter who our Pastor is or for how much time they will be focusing on our church in a week. Oh sure, it's great to have an awesome leader of the pack. And we have had that. And we will have it again. But for right now we are finding our way in a different new reality.

I for one did not come here for the Pastor. Mary Lou and I joined during an interim. We had people last week join during an interim time. The reason Mary Lou and I come to this church isn't the pastor, it's you. We come here because of you. This congregation, this community of people who have been here for us when times were great and when times were terrible. We as a group can lead this church into awesomeness whether we have a full time settled pastor or a part time one, we can do it and we can do it well.

Do you know how I know how awesome you all are? This is one of the ways. Sunday before last I found out that I would need to cover the services through Labor Day. Well, I already knew that I was going to be here today and Virginia Schiefelbein was gracious enough to take next week for communion. But from there on, I hadn't expected to have to go any farther. Someone suggested to ask the many pastors that attend our church so that was my intent. However, I was leaving on vacation and needed to get people in place that day and guess what. Not a single pastor was in worship that day. Not surprising. No judgement here. It is after all summer vacation. Anyway, I started asking people who were here if they would take a Sunday. The awesomeness of this congregation really showed up because I didn't have any trouble filling the Sunday's at all. Joe Gilson will be here Sunday after next on the 12th, Rich Brown said he would take the 19th, Anita Calcagno said she would do the 26th and Karen Ramthun will be here for Labor Day on September 2. And to top it off Bill Turner, Ben Banks and Marcia Kent said they would do whatever I needed them to do. But it isn't just the people who are willing to get up here, it's because of the rest of you being so supportive that others are willing. If that isn't an awesome group, I don't know what is.

So this next part of this little message should be easy. It's the responsive portion of the day. So ready?

Do you believe that the light of God shines on this church.

Do you believe that the light of God is in you.

Do you believe that you are a reflection of God's light within you.

Do you believe that we are a strong church.

Do you believe that we as a strong church are capable of moving forward and expanding our church.

Do you believe that you as an individual can use that light that shines through you to be a positive force for this church.

All right then.

We as First Congregational Grand Ledge church know what to do. We know how to be accepting of people and circumstances. We know how to stay positive and live in God's awesome light. So let's **practice** living in the light by knowing that no matter what, we can always find a better feeling thought so we can always be Living in the light of God . May it be so!

Amen