

First United Methodist Church

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Sometimes I find it amazing what people hear and remember from a message I give on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday evening. Quite often I find it's a word, thought, or phrase that I wouldn't have considered all that important. Yet, something about that word or phrase really connected with the person's spirit. To me, that is a sign of God's Spirit at work in a person's life.

In the past several weeks I've had a couple of people mention a phrase that I used a few weeks back. Actually, it was in the message I gave on Confirmation Sunday. In the message I mentioned Jesus giving his mission or purpose statement by quoting from Isaiah 61; proclaiming good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom for those in prison, setting free those who are oppressed. I had read in a commentary on those words, another writer talking about Jesus' mission being to punch holes in the darkness of our world. I liked that thought, it resonated with me. So, I used that image in my message – Jesus has come into our world to punch holes in the darkness and bring light into the darkness of people's lives. Yes, Jesus is the light of the world...even today!!

Do you realize that part of the reason the early church leaders picked the day they did to celebrate Christmas, or the birth of Jesus, was because of it's proximity to the winter solstice? You see, from that point forward, for the next 6 months, the days are getting longer, meaning there is more light filling the days. Symbolically, the thought was, Jesus birth represents the "light of the world" coming into our presence and filling our reality.

It is interesting that in the Gospel of John, Jesus, in several places, is referred to as "light." Matthew and Luke talk about the birth of Jesus in their opening chapters. John talks about Jesus' birth using the image of light; "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world." (John 1:9) Later on in John's gospel, in chapter 8, Jesus himself says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Jesus is here in our world punching holes in the darkness! That phrase resonates with me because it seems that so many of our days are filled with darkness. No, not literal darkness, but there is the darkness of anger, mistrust, hatred, racism, abuse, scandal, war, violence, despair, depression, division, oppression, famine, etc. It can be overwhelming. About 9 months ago I made the decision to stop watching the national evening news simply because it was filled with darkness and negativity. That one simple decision has made a difference in my soul.

The other difference that touched my soul in recent months was reading Jesus' story in the Bible. It is clear that Jesus says there will be struggles in life – there will be difficulties. There will be darkness. But he is also saying that as followers of his...as followers of Jesus, we are bearers of the light. We are to be the ones in the world today that are punching holes in the darkness, in Jesus name. Jesus is still in the "holes in darkness" business, but he is now doing it through us. So today, let your light shine...and punch some holes in the darkness. Remember these words from John 1:5, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Light wins every time!

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith

P.S. Remember, this Sunday, May 27, we go to one worship service at 9:30 on Sunday morning. Wednesday evening worship is still at 6:00 pm. Also, remember to be prayer walking your neighborhood...and be praying for our VBS Ministry that starts on Tuesday morning here at the church.