

October 21, 2018 message given by Barbara Camic at Little Utica UMC

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Don't you hate to walk into a dark room? Everything feels out of place even though nothing has moved. All you can think about is "Where's the light switch?" How do you feel when the power goes out at night without any warning, and you are surrounded with darkness? You immediately start looking for the flash light and candles. Most of us don't like the darkness. It makes us feel vulnerable, out of control, even helpless. In the dark we stumble into things.

Let me tell you about a friend of mine dealing with the dark. When she and her husband left Oswego to go to Fulton, it wasn't raining. Not very long into the drive a huge garbage truck with 4 flashing lights got in front of her. I can tell you she wasn't happy. It would slow her down and obstruct her vision. She was REALLY aggravated. Suddenly a black cloud darkened the sky. Rain began to pour down. She's still behind the garbage truck with the 4 flashing lights. Now she's doubly blinded from the rain and the spray from the truck tires. Those 4 flashing lights were the only thing she could see guiding her home. When they got into Fulton and the danger and drama had passed, her husband very quietly said, "Boy wasn't it a good thing God provided the light to see our way home?" My friends negative feelings about the garbage truck in her path changed from an irritant to being grateful for the light it provided and recognizing God's hand in bringing them safely home with those 4 flashing lights. Just think of the timing He provided for her car and the truck during the rain storm to come together when she needed it. Why did she leave Oswego when she did? Why was the garbage truck on that road when it was? All when the skies suddenly opened up? God provided the light. What an awesome God we have!!!

Have you ever been to a fireworks display? As darkness descends surrounding you, isolating you in a cloak of black, suddenly a burst of light appears sprinkling into beautiful shapes then dropping to earth all around you. You are captivated by the light, no longer aware of the darkness that still surrounds you. It's still there, of course, but the light, oh the beautiful light. It's brilliance lifts you up into a feeling of joy, excitement and a buoyant feeling of freedom. Then what seems like all too soon, no more light, only darkness leaving you wishing the light was back. But wait, don't be discouraged, there is hope. In John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life. Good news, right? LIGHT!! I'm sure we all agree we don't like darkness. It signals, for many of us, danger and the feeling of vulnerability.

I want to tell you a true story that I've been given permission to tell. Imagine being in an abusive situation with what seems like no way out, isolated, mentally and emotionally destroyed. She has no vehicle. Dependent for her every need. Just she and her little dog, alone. That was her life a little over a year ago. Then came Irma!! You remember Hurricane Irma? Right? Florida was a mess. The storm, still packing a heavy punch was headed straight for her and her lonely, alone house where she and her little dog were isolated. Imagine her fear. Perhaps there would be no power—no lights, water, air conditioning, no way to cook. Her home was totally electric. Flooding was a strong threat, as well as strong winds. She lived in a heavily wooded area. Hopeless it seems, right? Her mom and dad convinced her to rent a car and travel to them, 12 hours away. They would pay for the rental, if she could get a car. It had to be a rental place that would bring the car to her, remember, she

has no car. TRAPPED, but was she? Only one rental car business in her area would bring her a car, and they had only one left. Take it now, today. Must decide now. No time to think it over. Remember, Florida is a mess. Just before this Texas had Hurricane Harvey. Rental cars were being diverted to other storm hit areas. She and her mother kept saying, "Do it now or not get out. Do it now or not get out." What a blessing a rental car was brought to her. She and her parents knew God was working and they were so grateful. She spends the night packing, getting only three hours of sleep. Her eyes were hurting and burning before she even started her long grueling trip of 12 hours alone but for her little dog.

The road was packed with cars, mass evacuation from Florida and Georgia. As far as the eye could see cars not moving, many with gas cans strapped to them. She calls her mom telling her what she is seeing. She's worried she will run out of gas stuck on the road alone. Fear could be heard in her voice, while her mom begins praying in her mind asking Jesus to help her daughter. Suddenly her mother sees in her minds eye a figure in the distance walking among the cars. Her mom starts telling her what she is seeing. He's speaking to everyone as he walks and he's coming to her window next. Her mom believes it's Jesus she's seeing and He wants her to know she's not alone. He is with her. He is her light. There is nothing to fear.

John 1:5 says "We have heard from Him and declares to you, God is Light. In Him there is no darkness at all." That day both mother and daughter saw and felt the Light of Christ. Remember they are 12 hours apart. The mother's only tool was prayer. It turned into a 15 hour trip through traffic and a terrible rain storm a couple of hours from her destination. As night crept in and the rain began, she couldn't find the car light switch. She never did find it. Jesus guided her through that rain storm. What an awesome God we have In Jesus.

When she arrived at her parents house, the whites of her eyes looked like they were bleeding and were very painful. But she made it. Jesus led her from not only Storm Irma with His Light, but from an Abusive Storm into the Light of love, safety and peace.

Like the fireworks display, Jesus surrounds us with His Light. We reflect His Light when we share Him and His ways with others as we live our lives.

Matthew 5:14 Jesus says "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. We are a big part of Jesus Light Display for all to see.? We do that through serving and caring for others.

Every time you check on a sick friend

Send a "thinking of you" card in the mail

Serve at a community dinner for the hungry and lonely

Pray with or for someone hurting or sick— needing comfort

When you tell the check out person "thank you" for packing your groceries carefully

The Mission work you do

When you smile and greet people along your busy way

You are patient with a challenging person or situation

You share your hugs and welcoming ways

You show self-control when anger fills you to over flowing

Galatians 5:22-23 tells us what the fruits of the Spirit are. They are a reflection of Jesus, His Light. As you read them, think about the times you feel and reflect them letting others see Jesus Light through you.

The fruits of the Spirit are

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

So let's remember, just like those 4 flashing lights guiding my friends safely home, and Jesus guiding the mother's daughter through that long grueling 15 hour drive away from the storms of life to safety and love, we too, are a light shining for Jesus. So shine brightly to glorify God.

Revelation 22:5 says "And there will no longer be any night, and they will not have need of the light of a lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. Let's go shine.

AMEN