

Sermon: In A Thousand Thousand Things**Scripture: John 1:1-9****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: December 2, 2018**

We'll hear this scripture again at the beautiful Service of Light on December 20th and often it's read during the 12 days of Christmas, but I wanted to place this here at the beginning as we consider the symbols of Christmas because light is the most essential symbol of Christmas – the light come into the darkness.

The Jewish doctor, author and teacher Rachel Naomi Remen who wrote the NYTimes bestselling books - Kitchen Table Wisdom and My Grandfather's Blessings – shares a beautiful story about the origins of our world which was told to her as a child by her grandfather who was a student of Kabbalah which is a mystical school of thought in Judaism. She calls it “the story of the birthday of the world”. And it goes like this:

In the beginning there was only the Holy Darkness, the Ein Sof, in Hebrew, God, the very source of life. In the course of history, at a moment in time this world, the world of a thousand thousand things, emerged from the heart of the Holy Darkness as a great ray of light. And then there was an accident and the vessels containing the light of the world, the wholeness of the world, broke and the light of the world was scattered into a thousand thousand fragments of light and they fell into all people and into all things and into all events where they remain deeply hidden until this very day.

According to Dr. Remen's grandfather, the whole human race came into existence as a response to this accident. We are here because

we are born with the capacity to find the hidden light in all events and all people and all things and to lift it up and make it visible once again and to restore the innate wholeness of the light of the world.

It's called tikkun olam in Hebrew, this task that is ours to restore the world to it's original wholeness in light. It's a collective task involving all people who have ever been born, all people who are presently alive and all people yet to be born. We are all called to find the light in others, heal the places where the light is obscured and we do it altogether. No one has to save the world themselves but we each do our small part with the part of the world that we come in contact with. That's the way the story is told.

As Christians, though, we believe that there was one particular human being who was born, born lowly and in a manger, and the light of Ein Sof, of God, shone so strongly through him and his light ignited the light in others who ignited the light in others and so on and so forth across this world and the light healed and it unified and it brought peace and even today it is still beckoning us to release our own light which then releases the light of others too.

At Advent when the outside light is growing weaker, the days shorter and nights longer, we light candles of the advent wreath and the lights of Christmas trees to remind us of the light of God in each one of us and the light of Christ coming into the world all over again, anew and inspiring us to be light for others.

This is a good story for sharing in communion together as well. Just like in the Kabbalah story where the original wholeness and ray of light was broken into a thousand thousand things so too Jesus himself,

God made manifest, was broken into pieces at one point in time and his light scattered but this made it possible for us to receive the power and vitality of His light into ourselves. So when we partake of communion and eat the little piece of bread dipped in juice we can think of it as containing the Christ light, entering us joining with the light of God already in us from the beginning and strengthening us to be light for others so they too can reveal their light and so forth and so on. "The light has come into the world and the darkness has not overcome it."

So this is a very special meal of light that we are about to share together here at the start of Advent and Rebecca and Laurie, understanding how special this meal is, have agreed to set the table for us in a very special way, for this table is set for you and for me and for everyone here as a way of being aware of God's presence with us right here, right now and always...

Call to Communion

Jesus says "come ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." The table has been prepared and you are invited. Whoever you are and wherever you are on your life's journey, you are welcome to come to this table and receive a piece of God, a portion of light, that it may strengthen you for the journey and draw forth the light in you to be light for the world. Come to this table here on the first Sunday of Advent as we begin preparing for Christmas and the coming of Christ anew into the world, come for all things are ready.