

Meditation: *Illuminate Me*, by Annie Krenz adapted for meditation

(center in, aware of breath in and out— eyes closed, or gently focused on the candle flame, hands on heart and belly, or resting on your lap...)

God, give me light in my heart. Illuminate me. Oh God, give me light. Light in my heart and light in my home. Light in my hearing. Light in my sight. Light in my feeling, all of my body. God give me light. Illuminate me. Light before me, light behind me. Light on my right hand, light on my left hand. Light above me, light beneath me. Love, increase the light within me. Give me light, illuminate me.

(sense your light increasing— sense sharing it here, in this community, with a loved one, let your holy imagination bring your light wherever you see a need for light in the darkness...)

Message:

Here is Psalm 43:

- 1 Vindicate me, my God,
and plead my cause
against an unfaithful nation.
Rescue me from those who are
deceitful and wicked.
- 2 You are God my stronghold.
Why have you rejected me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?
- 3 O Send out your light and your truth,
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.
- 4 Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.

Our ongoing human story has always been filled with moments of brilliance and moments of horror. Let your light and truth lead me to the place where you dwell... and we know that the altar of God is everywhere we are! The dwelling place of the Presence of all that is cannot be anything else but present. It is *our* eyes and hearts that need to remember, *our* hands and feet that we must allow to be led by light and truth.

In November, Diane Teutschman offered an opening prayer inviting us to be a lighthouse. Here is an excerpt from that, from the daily devotional book ***Until Today***, by Iyanla Vanzant:

The greatest service I can offer is... being a light on the path.

...When ships lose their way, they are guided by the lighthouse. When there is trouble or danger at sea, you can seek refuge by the light of the lighthouse. In the midst of a storm the lighthouse will always guide the ships safely to shore. Best of all, there is always someone in the lighthouse.

Be a lighthouse. Let your life be a shining symbol for others. Let everything you do be in service to someone. Stand tall in the knowledge of who you are. Stand proudly in the midst of difficult times. Be aware that who you are and what you have to offer can be a beacon...

Be a lighthouse keeper...Be alert to those who may be in need and have nowhere to go or no way to get there...Remember, no matter what condition a wind-blown sailor reaches the lighthouse in, the keeper is always welcoming. The keeper always encourages. The keeper always has something on hand or knows what to do to get you up and sailing again.

Be a lighthouse keeper. Be a lighthouse. Be light!

And in illuminating the way for each other, what if we also learn from our shadows? This morning, wrestling with my own fear and near despair about the state of the world, I listened to a guided meditation on my Plum Village App (Thich Nhat Hanh) and was reminded that simply centering on my breath could bring me back into my body and release me from the power of spinning thoughts of fear. Even for a minute or two, this practice is always available to me!

And then I listened to a poem read by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer on my Ritual app. 😊 Here is Groundhog Day:

Groundhog Day

May I not only see my own shadow
but may I let it wrestle me
the way an angel once met Jacob
then wrestled him till dawn.
May we scrabble and scrap
until I am trembling, exhausted,
until the shadow dislocates what I think I know
about how to move through the world,
until panting I beg it to bless me,
cling to it until it gives me a new name.
I want to know everything
I am capable of—the destruction,
the ferocity, the benediction.
I don't need to know the weather.
I just want to know that I can meet
whatever comes, even
the darkest parts of myself,
and learn from them,
then limp into the daylight
toward healing, toward wholeness.

Last week I quoted an article by Luke Healy:

While there are certainly healthy practices to release the grip of our ego identity, unless they are integrated with communal engagement, loving service, and authentic relationality, they will only get us so far.”

These two practices– mediation, and poetry–helped me release my ego from its grip of helplessness, despair, and fear, and led me to the altar of God. Walking with a friend and dancing in community did the same on other days this past week. The practices that allow us to wrestle with angels, and with our shadows are the practices that the lighthouse keeper uses to clean the windows of the lighthouse, so that light shines bright and clear.

And then we bring our light– limping or dancing– bring our light in service to the world. We build relationships. We let our hearts be refuge for a friend. We shine the light of a kind smile and friendly greeting on a stranger in line at the grocery store. We gather books and food and solidarity and sanctuary for our neighbors in need. We allow God’s light– that light that WE ARE– to glow like a candle, to shine like the sun, to be a point of blazing starlight, to be a beacon of light from a lighthouse.

Matthew 5:14-16

5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.

5:15 No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.

5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to God.

You *are* the light of the world. You *are* the lighthouse. You *are* the lighthouse keeper... And so it is. Amen.