

## **“Logos, Light, and Life”**

Rev. Ken McGarry at The First Congregational Church in Stoneham, Massachusetts  
January 2, 2022 – The Second Sunday after Christmas  
Jeremiah 31:7-14; John 1:1-18

Happy New Year! It is a good time of the year -- this time when we reflect upon the year that has now behind us and we peer ahead to the year that is before us. It is at this good time of the year that we make resolutions, considering the things in our lives that might need to change or what we might need to add or take away from our lives to be happier and healthier. And it's a season for hope as we consider the ways that God may come to us anew -- ways that can change the world for the better in the coming year. So this is a perfect day for us to read today's hopeful scripture lessons.

The passage from Jeremiah offers us a bright word of hope. These words were written to a people who were living without hope as they were forced out of their own land and were living in exile in Babylon and elsewhere in the Babylonian Empire. Through the prophet Jeremiah, they were offered a word of hope that God would return them to their own land, where they would once again be able to worship their own God in their own temple.

We were also offered a good word in the Gospel of John, which was written to people experiencing their own dark times. The gospel tells us that the Eternal One came and experienced some of the dark times of humanity in the person of Jesus. He came as the Logos, that is the Word or the Reason of God, who took flesh and dwelt among us. He lived with us as the embodiment of divine wisdom, Torah in person. And as he lived among us, God experienced humanity and showed us how to experience humanity.

Jesus was the Light of God that shined among us, and that still shines to light our way, showing us how we can live in love and so experience life as God intends for us to experience life, fully blessed by God with grace upon grace upon grace. If we can do that in this New Year as we make our resolutions, wouldn't that be a great blessing to ourselves and to the world? This is a good thing for us to resolve to do, so let us resolve to walk in the way lit by Christ, the way of love, that we might experience more of God's grace, more of god's life, that we might sparkle a

little more, reflecting more of God's life in the world that's greatly in need of more of God's light.

Here at the beginning of this year of our Lord 2022, as we take a look back at the year that just passed us, which was unfortunately another year of pandemic sorrow, we remember that at the beginning of last year, we had hope that that the pandemic would have ended by now. But here we are, still dealing with disease, death, and disruptions; plagued by supply-chain issues and inflation; and now we're living with the highly contagious omicron variant. Unfortunately, so many of us, even today, refuse to do even the easy and simple things that we can do to protect one another from getting this dangerous disease. And we've witnessed that many have regressed to childlike and selfish behaviors. In this last year, we witnessed disagreements and conflicts, not just because of our reaction to COVID, but over all kinds of issues. Our disagreements have led to violence and destruction in many places in the world, including here in our own nation. And now we worry about increasing incivility and growing divides between people with ideological or other differences. We worry about our inability to communicate with people who are not of our own tribe or those whose sources of information differ somehow from our own. Indeed, this last year, we've witnessed way too much bad behavior from people, and now we worry way too much about the worse behavior that we expect from people this year in the years to come.

But let us not lose hope! For while we have witnessed much bad behavior, we also saw exceptionally good behavior from people. In this last year, there were many that walked in the light and that reflected the light of Christ for all to see. Just yesterday, in South Africa, there was a celebration of the life of one such shining person: South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was one of the great ones of our faith. He sparkled and shined as he used his life's energy to reflect the light of God, shining light on the injustice of apartheid and living as a champion for the rights of LGBTQ people in South Africa and around the world. Desmond Tutu was one of many who pointed to the path of justice lit by Christ, and he was a good example of how we should live, leading others to and along that path, so that together, we could move the world towards brightness. Because of his work, and because of so many other light-bearers like Bishop Tutu, saints and positions of power as well the saints we interact with each day where

we live (and I know this room is filled with them, people who share God's blessings with others in the world), there has been a growth of God's light and life here and in the world! We trust that more of God's light will shine in the world as we continue together in Christ's way of compassionate and selfless love.

So in this New Year, let us commit ourselves to carrying the light together and to encouraging those around us to reflect the light of Christ. Whenever the forces of darkness push back -- and they always will -- push forward harder, knowing that, ultimately, the darkness cannot overcome the light of Christ. This is our good news; this is our hope!

Dear friends, on this good day and throughout this good New Year, may the light of Christ shine on you, may the light of Christ shine because of you, and may the light of Christ fill the whole world with God's love and God's life. Amen.