

# “Shining”

John 1:1-5, 10:10b, 15:11b, Jeremiah 31:11-14, Ephesians 1:3-6 & 18

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Susanna Metz asks, “How do we connect this deep soul revelation of God’s love and powerful desire to forgive us with our day to day existence? That, I believe is one of the blessed joys scripture brings to our minds during the Christmas season.”

Everyone in the Christmas story was transformed. They all discovered the light God infused into their being. They discovered how to shine.

You are created with order, life, love, and light in every cell of your being. The gospel of John explains, **John 1:1-5 NLT “In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Jesus, and nothing was created except through Jesus. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and Jesus’ life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”**

John Nuys wrote, “The term for Word in the original text is logos: the same term from which we get our word logic. Logic—organizing principle: the thing that organizes other things so that the essence is realized. Biologists tell us that DNA is the organizing principle of organic life. DNA is the thing that organizes other things. The code or logic of a strand of self-replicating protein is what organizes life. There are lots of organizing principles at work in our world and in us. But the main one, the first one, and the best one is the Word of God—who is Jesus Christ, who is Love. That divine organizing principle of compassion, forgiveness, redemption; of God’s love made real is the essence of the best life of all.”

Barbara Brown Taylor asks, “If Love is the Word that needed to take on human form in Jesus Christ, what is the Word of God that needs to take human form in you?”

Thomas Keating reminds us, “God is always in our hearts, closer to us than we are sometimes to ourselves. No matter what state we are in good or bad—God waits for us to acknowledge the Divine presence.”

Today we celebrate epiphany the manifestation of God to us, God revealing Godself to us. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed. **Jeremiah 31:12b “They will be radiant because of the Lord’s good gifts.”** The Apostle Paul prayed **Ephesians 1:18a “that your hearts will be flooded with light.”** Matthew tells of wise people who followed the light of a star meeting Jesus, the light of the world, who illumined them. These wise people joyfully shinned with passionate love. Jesus, the word, logic, order, light, created every one of our cells with logic, order, and dancing light. Jesus created a world flooded with light; by day, light so powerful that plants thrive and all is energized, a world of wonder by night as the stars encourage us to savor God.

When we miss the light of God all around us and in us, God weeps. Every one of our cells reveals God, every aspect of light, life, and energy revels God. Yet somehow, at times we do not perceive God, wondering where is God. At times we feel unloved, alone, that we are not precious, that we do not have abundant, marvelous gifts to share, that we do not belong. When we feel this way, Jesus weeps. Jesus took on flesh to reveal Godself to us, to point out the light all around us, the creative order within us, the Holy Spirit who connects all and revives all. Jesus came to fill us with love promising that love endures forever. Jesus came to fill us with joy, a complete joy, to give us the joy that is the very essence of God, the joy that delighted in creating the cosmos, the joy that will forever inspire life to flourish. Jesus came to fill us with peace, forgiving, whole, complete, perfecting peace. Jesus came to make our life abundant for eternity.

How do you perceive God? How do you shine with God’s light? What do you do to open your senses to God when your perception of God wavers?

After Jesus’ crucifixion, two disciples were distraught. The resurrected Jesus walked and talked with them, yet they still did not recognize Jesus. Their minds could not perceive God. They couldn’t make sense of it so their cells, the very fiber, the DNA, of their being revealed God by dancing, warming them. The disciples described it as their hearts feeling strangely warm. After more thought and talk their minds finally recognize Jesus. They were set on fire with passion and joy. They shined and shared the good news.

What is your passion? What is it within you that Jesus is setting on fire to make you shine? How do you nurture your passion?

Musicians can play and sing all the correct notes and make a nice sound; however, passion makes the music comes alive inspiring all who hear it.

Some people's passion can seem odd and mundane to you, because your passion is different. All of us have several passions. I was in college when I discovered one of my passions, economics, especially marginal utility. The more complex and numerous the variables the more fascinating the quest to find the optimal combination, which only lasts for an instant until one variable changes and then you get to find the next optimal convergence.

One of my professor's passions was farming; but an accident left him without a hand, so he discovered another passion, teaching. One class he taught was the art, the intuition, the sixth sense, of marginal utility economics. After careful calculation, you reach a point where you need to sense the dancing of every cell involved, the life, order, and light God created in all of it, using all your senses you pick a combination, try it, and repeat over and over. You anticipate how the variables will change in the future creating a plan that constantly flexes and evolves with all of it. This is exhilarating fun for me.

The Apostle Paul in essence said you can have the right formula, know all the variables and solve the equation, you can be a productive, law abiding person; but without love, life is meaningless.

My passionate love for marginal utility economics with the sixth sense enabled me to enjoy a successful career as a Dairy Nutrition Consultant. I was so successful in helping dairy farmers optimize their milk production, making them profitable, that I was promoted to training consultants and troubleshooting situations that perplexed others. I rarely found a mistake in the numbers. The variables were already scrutinized and the numbers crunched by several experts. Sometimes the limiting factor was a difference between the feed ration recommended, the one fed and the one consumed. You can recommend the perfect ration, but it is useless if it is not fed correctly or the cows do not eat the right amount. I found inconsistencies like an employee under feeding the cows on Friday night and then over feeding them Monday morning. One feed ration consumption averaged out perfectly, but it was a mix that some cows enjoyed over-eating while others didn't care for it, under-eating, and making all of them sick. Often the cows were unhappy due to air quality, exercise, schedule, temperature, or health. My colleagues and I made fascinating discoveries on feedstuff combinations that delivered synergistic nutrition and others that, despite looking great on paper, never worked.

When I told my agricultural economics professor, I was going to become a pastor he urged me to utilize my passion for marginal utility economics. He advised me to help others analyze their lifestyle to help each person find the optimal way to perceive God and live their passion. My passion is helping others enjoy God. I have discovered that each person has a different passion and different ways of perceiving God. Every circumstance, every moment, is different, so each person's passion and perception of God is unique and constantly evolving.

The Spiritual Direction group I belonged to was passionate about helping others celebrate their loving connection with God. Sometimes we got formal, heady, as we utilized an M.I.T. model called Theory U to identify steps and aspects of spiritual transformation. Sometimes we were heartfelt as we shared experiences of God in the mountains, art, a battle with cancer, music, a massage, or the delicious taste of a family cornbread recipe passed down for generations served with honey from a local beekeeper.

My resolution for 2015 is to enjoy God and passionately shine God's light. My life is a constantly changing mix of numerous variables, so every moment the optimal way to be, live, and do is changing. I resolve to enjoy God by reading scripture and singing when no one is around. I will go for walks with Leslie. I will tell Spencer and Abigail to have fun, do your best, and then celebrate them. I will make my family heaping, large bowls of delicious, hot air popped, real buttered popcorn, so we can delight every sense as we watch a movie together. I will savor the wisdom of my father. I will be filled with wonder as I cross country ski on a starry calm night on sparkling snow. The sensation of the cool fresh air invigorating me. The rhythm of skis on the snow singing to me. The distant light of the cosmos twinkling, dancing as it reflects off the snow suffusing me with the essence of God that permeates all. I will let go of negativity, guilt over the past, anxiety over the future, and live in the present. I will choose to celebrate and give thanks for the good. Jesus and I will go for exhilarating bike rides. I will delight in the unforced rhythms of grace.

I will cherish the opportunities to listen to you, eager to help you discover how God is delighting in you and transforming you. I will share sermons, hopefully written with the Holy Spirit, that inspire you to dance with God, to explore your faith, to expand your thinking, peace, love and joy, that reveal another facet of God, another delight of God's blessings. Sermons that fill you with awe and wonder of the glory of our awesome God, that reveal that all of us will grow in love and experience new loves for infinite.

How will you cherish God? How will you receive the light and shine? How will you live your God given passion?

The prophet Jeremiah wrote down God's message to you. **Jeremiah 31:11-14 NLT** "For the Lord has redeemed Israel from those too strong for them. They will come home and sing songs of joy on the heights of Jerusalem. They will be radiant because of the Lord's good gifts—the abundant crops of grain, new wine, and olive oil, and the healthy flocks and herds. Their life will be like a watered garden, and all their sorrows will be gone. The young women will dance for joy, and the men—old and young—will join in the celebration. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and exchange their sorrow for rejoicing. The priests will enjoy abundance, and my people will feast on my good gifts. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

The Apostle Paul said, **Ephesians 1:3-6 & 18 NLT** "All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before Jesus made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in God's eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into God's own family by bringing us to Godself through Jesus Christ. This is what God wanted to do, and it gave God great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace God has poured out on us who belong to God's dear Son. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope God has given to those God called—God's holy people who are God's rich and glorious inheritance."

Jesus said, **John 10:10b** "I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly." **John 15:11** "...so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

How will you enjoy God in your daily life?

What aspect of God's light is Jesus setting on fire in you? Amen