

Recently, Matt Boswell, pastor at Camas Friends Church, wrote:

In the beginning God creates. But not out of nothing, at least according to Genesis.

“Let there be light!” says God. And out of darkness comes light.

But darkness is not “nothing.” Darkness is the raw, chaotic, messy material of life, of stuff, of is-ness. Darkness is neither all good nor all bad but the seedbed of new creation. New beginnings. New life. New light.

Darkness is incubation. Potential. Conflict. Setback. Tragedy. Angst. Imbalance. Wildness. Dreaming. Injustice. Percolation. Tension. Stirring. Bewilderment. Reformation. Death. Waiting. Anticipation. Resolve.

A new year has begun. “Let there be light!” says the voice of God to us, here and now. God gives an invitation: to be co-responsible for the emergence and brightening of this light.

Where are you called, in 2018, to help create newness in your life or in the lives of others? Where are you called to help bring light out of darkness?

I’ve been thinking about that...

We often talk about darkness as if it is all bad in and of itself
We look for the light in the darkness
We seek to be light in the darkness
We seek protection in the darkness

But, can the darkness itself have purpose?

Night—we need the darkness to cover the earth and provide respite

Time to sleep and be restored

Those of us who have worked at night, know the difficulty of sleeping in daylight

All living beings are impacted by the cycles of day and night

Whether they are nocturnal or active in daylight

True for humans, animals and the plant world

When dark, humans produce melatonin which signals our bodies that it is time to sleep

In daylight, levels of melatonin decrease, telling our bodies to wake up

Sleep resets our brains and our memories—so they are functional the next day

A seed must be buried and “die” so that it can grow and flourish

Jesus died before he was resurrected

There is a natural life cycle of life and death and life and death and life...

We need down time in order to function well

Matt Boswell suggested that darkness is a “*seedbed of new creation. New beginnings. New life. New light.*”

I acknowledge that there are times when the darkness is simply bad!

But other times, it is like cocooning—a place to withdraw, reset, and find new life

In those times, I have to allow the process time to come to fullness

As an extrovert, I could keep busy and stimulated—but I must stop and be

I must slow down so I can hear the still small voice, find the Presence, and find my way

There is also something about facing into the darkness

What is the darkness?

What can I learn in this place?

I must ask—am I to leave or is there purpose in staying awhile longer?

Is this a place of incubation?

How do I respond to all that comes with this time of incubation?

Potential. Conflict. Setback. Tragedy. Angst. Imbalance. Wildness. Dreaming.

Injustice. Percolation. Tension. Stirring. Bewilderment. Reformation. Death.

Waiting. Anticipation. Resolve.

This is the God miracle...

I cannot create light

But in staying present to what is... even as the darkness swirls around me

I let God bring goodness out of the difficult

In time, I'm shown the way—shown my next steps

Can I allow God to transform me? Or that which is around me?

How do I submit to the transforming work, without giving in to despair?

Rather than fighting against it, can I stay present and do the work before me?

What is the gift in this time of withdrawal?

Will I wait for the Light to come or will create my own light?

And in so doing, never see the true Light that has begun to shine

Because the Light comes like the dawn—dimly at first, growing slowly

In recent years, I've learned that conflict isn't all bad

That it is through conflict that creative third ways emerge—if we stay present to each other

If we maintain respect and work together while Listening for God's Leading

It has also been suggested that we not withdraw from conflict

That the world needs people to be practiced at Listening together

At putting our differences honestly before us and holding them together

At believing there is way forward if we will stay with the process

Recently Julie Peyton talked about being peacemakers

She suggested EMTs and fire fighters practice so they know what to do in emergencies

And that as peacemakers, we need to be practiced at doing peace

That it doesn't happen automatically

Again, if we stay present to what is, our differences, the truth, our struggle...

We can find the next steps—we can find way forward—we can hear Leading

The same is true with the darkness—we can know how to be in this time if we Listen

It may be that God moves us quickly out of a difficult situation

But we may also have work to do in this place

I want to submit to the full transformation of my being and allow God to do God's work

Sometimes that means staying present to what is—waiting in the darkness

Yet knowing that God said, "Let there be light!"—the dawn emerges... the darkness recedes...

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us. Luke 1:78 NRSV