

Sardis Moon

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A Homily for Sardis Baptist Church

Dedication for Curtis and Hank Taylor

May 5, 2019

Mark 10:13-18; 12:28-31

I am delighted that the days are back to being longer. It's so nice to finish supper, and still see the sun. But I have to admit, there is one thing I miss about the early darkness of winter – not enough to trade it for the extended sunshine – but I still miss it a little. If you ever come to Sardis after sundown, and there are people here, the big circular window on the front of the meetinghouse doubles as a bright yellow moon. You turn left into the drive, and there it is, a beacon, peering out of dark woods.

The meetinghouse moon is steeped in me like other beacons in my life: the lit bell tower at Furman; the steeple of Wait Chapel at Wake Forest; the Reynolds Tower in Winston-Salem; the red *Hot Doughnuts Now* light at the Krispy Kreme on Peace Street in Raleigh; the Varsity sign on I-75 in downtown Atlanta; the giant peach on I-85 in Gaffney...the list goes on.

Some of these lights are more serious than others, but all are sacred in their own way. These lights, or these beacons connect me instantly to memories of the people and places who have shaped me. The divine washes over me at their very mention, because they remind me of the moments when God has been SO palpable and SO present in my life.

For example, when I see the Sardis moon, I know that the choir is rehearsing, or that a meal for Sardis Academy is being prepared, or that people are gathering, and talking, and philosophizing, and just being Sardis. And no matter how dark or cold it is outside, and no matter how long a week it's been, there's gonna be light in that room.

Just like as a twenty-something working in downtown Atlanta, I knew that a hotdog at the Varsity and the sports page from the AJC were the perfect cure for a stressful morning at the office. Because, where else can you sit in a school desk, consume 7,000 delicious calories full of carbohydrates, and somehow be instantly transported to a youth mission trip, or a past family gathering, or the exhilarating end to a Braves game? Beacons have power.

And I guess what I'm trying to get at this morning, is that I want that Sardis moon to mean something special for Curtis and Hank, too. Not because it's special for us. Or because they think it should be special for them. But because, they've had some kind of formative, authentic, holy, genuine experience that's made it so.

When Curtis and Hank get to be driving age, and they go on their first Road Trip to see Widespread in Athens, GA, and they pass that giant peach on I-85, I envision Curtis asking Hank:

“You remember when J-Swizz and Hilary drove us to South Carolina for that youth event, and we all stopped to take a selfie by the peach?”

“I sure do,” Hank says. “They told us about the bear mace incident of 2014. And the Byrd girls, and the Stillerman girls told us that if we tried something like that they’d never go with us on another trip again.”

“Haha,” Curtis says, “Aren’t you glad we didn’t listen?”

“Yeah,” Hank says, “I mean It’s bear mace. Gotta do it. Got to. And we never would have even tried if the Mata kids hadn’t insisted. Church buddies are the best!

And then of course that memory leads to a deep theological discussion...

The candles we lit today, and the rocks we signed today are our pledge to create beacons for the Taylor boys, and for all of our children.

The question is, “How do we do that?”

Our scriptures offer a good place to start.

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.”

Children have a super power – they are seeing the world for the first time. And they don’t have to imagine that God’s kingdom is some future reality, because they have the presence of mind to grasp it right now. When we sing, they squeal with delight. When we pray, they offer their babbles and cries, too. When they see doughnuts and ice cream, they see sticky joy. When they hear stories of old, stories long familiar to us, their imaginations leap to join Noah on the Ark, and Zacchaeus in a tree, and Miriam by the river. And they long to know God, and to show God to others, and to be part of God’s world. And they tarry, here in this garden called Sardis.

If we want that Sardis moon to mean something for Curtis and Hank, then we need to be a community where they can receive God’s kingdom just as they are: children of God. And we need to be intentional about seeing God’s kingdom through their eyes.

Jesus reminds us of the greatest commandment: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

We need to love these boys as hard as they laugh; as far as they play and run; as loud as they sing; as sweet as they hug; as intensely as their little minds think; and as wide as their little eyes gaze.

In other words, we need to invest toddler-strength energy into their lives. Because how we choose to love them, and every child, young and old, is a direct reflection of the kind of God they'll know in the world. When we love them, we love God, and we make God tangible, good, creative, real, lasting, vital in their lives. And ours, too.

Sardis is quirky, and eclectic, and weird, and wonderful, and fierce, and loyal, and creative, and full of love.

And God is quirky, and eclectic, and weird, and wonderful, and fierce, and loyal, and creative, and full of love.

And I think if Curtis and Hank are allowed to be themselves, and are loved by us, they're gonna know a God and a church family that is quirky, and eclectic, and weird, and wonderful, and fierce, and loyal, and creative, and full of love.

And that's gonna make for a pretty special Sardis moon.

May It be so. And may it begin, right now.