

Isaiah 2:1-5
John 1:1-14
November 28, 2010

The Visibility Cloak

In Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows we learn of the origin of Harry's Cloak of Invisibility. Harry throws this cloak over his head to make himself disappear at critical points in his magical adventures. It shields him completely from being seen by other people, and it cannot be worn out by time or spells. Don't you wish that at times you had an invisibility cloak? There are days when we'd all like to disappear. We make mistakes. We get embarrassed. There are people we might want to avoid. We would like some quiet time or some privacy. If only we could hide like that!

Apparently science is in the process of providing some help. Researchers have demonstrated that they are now able to cloak three-dimensional objects using artificially engineered materials that redirect light *around* an object. These materials deflect light waves around a body, like water flowing around a smooth rock in a stream. Further research has shown that with a "tapered waveguide," you can cloak larger areas. A few years back, scientists could only cloak an area as wide a wave of light, now they can cloak areas as wide as a

thick human hair. The bottom line is that if you want to be invisible, you have to find a way to bend light around yourself. If light is reflected, then you're going to be seen.¹

It is clear from Isaiah and from the Gospel of John that God hopes not to hide things; but to make things visible. Isaiah invites us to walk in the light of the Lord and John calls Jesus the light that shines in the darkness. God is talking about a Visibility Cloak. God is talking sunshine, illumination and revelation. The biblical call is to disperse the shadows, reveal hope and truth, and provide a beacon for the world. Although an invisibility cloak might be cool, it's about bending light, becoming invisible and hiding. God, it seems, would rather have us reflect the light. God would have us live a life of faithful visibility.

I know that all of us keep track of the calendar year that runs from January to December and most of us keep track of the school year, but the third calendar under which we live is the church year which runs from Advent to Christ the King Sunday. Last Sunday was Christ the King and today is the first Sunday of Advent. Today is the first day of the church year. Advent comes each year when the days

¹ <http://news.uns.purdue.edu/x/2009a/090520ShalaevCloaking.html>

in the Northern hemisphere are getting darker. The Advent proclamation is that Jesus, the light of the world, is coming again into the world made through him; the world that often seems not to remember him. Gosh the sun sets early in Advent. In the coming December darkness, God would have us reflect on and reflect out our faith. God says in Isaiah's singing voice, O Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Isaiah lays out a wondrous vision for people of faith. Aware of the darkness that people experience, Isaiah sings of God's future. God's future is so bright that nations shall stream to it. Interesting things about those words in Isaiah is that they could also be translated as the nations will be attracted to God's joyful radiance. Nations that are known for warfare, wandering and selfishness will stream to God's illuminating presence to learn God's ways. God's teaching will replace the darkness they know and to which they are accustomed.

A new community is being gathered to the Holy, A multicultural, multiracial, multilingual convergence. Coming nearer, they urge each other on and call out to each other the longing that draws them toward a common center. This worship that they will

experience will not be mediated by priest or religion. God will be the interface. God will get opponents to speak. God will patch up old wounds. God will get enemies to talk. God will heal families, mend addictions, dispel darkness and sooth hearts. In God's light, people will be able to discern the false instruction they receive from the gods of their culture. It will be so truly amazing, says Isaiah, that spears and swords will be fashioned into plows. The enormously costly technology of warfare will be transformed into technology that gives life. The things that God teaches will make an actual difference in the way the world works, inequities will be balanced, shackles will be loosed, wrongs will be righted, true justice will reign. Both Isaiah and John sing of a day of radiant gladness.²

Back in the real world, South Korea was attacked by the whacko from the north. People die everyday in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Israel and Islamic Militants exchange threats and warfare, families fight, work places are stress races, homes are foreclosed. No one can read the promises from Isaiah and not feel a little hope. No one can read the headlines in our media and not doubt Isaiah. It's hard to believe that swords will be beaten into plowshares anytime

² Stacey Simpson Duke and Paul Simpson Duke in Feasting on the Word, Year A Volume 1, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville KY, 2010 pp4-7.

soon; yet we hope, yet we walk in the light of God and therefore we help.

Back in the real world, the craziness of the commercial Christmas has gotten swirled up into these biblical promises of light, love and calm. Advent / Christmas is a special time because we so very many of us, show our love in undeniably concrete ways. We write cards. We decorate and throw parties. We revel in the arts. We visit family. We eat like royalty. We go above and beyond and if the truth be told, in many cases spoil our loved ones. At Christmas we pin our hopes on gifts and feasts rather than open ourselves to the risky possibility of believing in the seemingly impossible. We try to make tangible the light filled promises of scripture and often realize in the January hangover, how far short we have fallen. This year we have one more excuse to help us indulge.

I was having coffee with a friend last week who was lamenting the irony we find ourselves in this December. Our economy is stuck and many amateur pop economists would have us “unstuck it” by again over spending. It almost seems as if the whole world depends on our endless American Consumer über consumption. It’s almost as if it is patriotic to blow the family budget and shop through Advent.

Just when our savings rate, in this country has finally gone up, just when total credit card debt in this nation has started a nice trend downward, even now the “pop”economists urge us to get into the act. It’s almost as if people want to make our overindulgences invisible again with a cloak of false promises. Ultimately twin bright lights of saving and investing money wisely will right our economy.

A couple of years back our church stumbled upon a coalition and a website called the Advent Conspiracy. We shared their information in worship, we joined and many people were moved by the points they were making. Some people rather liked the ideas but were put off by the “conspiracy” part of the title. I think the word conspiracy implies that the Advent Empire we are up against is pretty strong. To change it, we first have to shine God’s light upon it. I would like to show a short video clip that explains the Advent Conspiracy to any who may not have heard about it and to those who recuperating from Black Friday, and might need a refresher.

(Play the 2009 Intro Video)³

Worship Fully this Light Shining in the Darkness

Spend Less

³ Adventconspiracy.org

Give More of our real presence to our families and friends

Love all through generosity to those in need

I think this video helps shed some light on what we each face as we head into the light of the Advent Season. It seems illogical and perhaps laughable to place any trust in the dreams of Isaiah. But like a running back on a football team once said, I see some light ahead and I run for it, I aim for it, I rush at it and sometimes I break free. The light has not yet conquered the darkness but the future belongs to God and those who have glimpsed God's light, need to walk in that light. Those who have seen such light, need to reflect it. The way forward is to walk in the light of God.