



Thoughts On The Journey

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For as long as I can remember, I have had an affinity for lighthouses. When I was younger, I was sure I must have lived in a lighthouse at one time, because they felt like 'home' to me. Up until one point, I just admired lighthouses in pictures and books. But, when I was older, I had the opportunity to visit a number of lighthouses in Maine, Massachusetts, Georgia, Ohio, and in Michigan, all of them beautiful specimens.

In 1999, I decided to vacation in a Michigan town about twenty-five miles west of Marquette. To my surprise, it was home to the Big Bay lighthouse that overlooked Lake Superior. The light was within walking distance of the house I was renting, which provided a perfect opportunity to spend time pondering why I was so drawn to these beacons. After hours, over the course of a week, I came to the conclusion that, for me, lighthouses were icons of God's providence and inspired this poem:

Light of Love

*Let me be the Light of Love that leads a soul to home.
A light that takes the anxiousness and calms it from its
roam.
A light that shatters grim despair, replacing it with Hope,
A prismatic revelation that diffuses one's spiritual scope.*

*Let me be the Arms of Love that reach for hardened
hearts:
Arms that nurture confidence and dismantle fear apart;
Arms with no conditions, and arms with fortitude;
Arms that foster self-respect and lend some solitude.*

*Let me be the Heart of Love reflecting my Savior's gifts;
A heart that knows no selfishness... that mends, that
bonds, that lifts;
A heart that extends forgiveness to the point of sacrifice,
The heart, the arms, the light of Love,
...that leads souls to paradise.*

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In the gospel passage of Matthew this week Jesus speaks of what we shouldn't fear and what we should fear. The phrase, "Do not fear," appears 3 times. With these words, Jesus encouraged the disciples and attacked the fears that could make them abandon their mission. Jesus assured them that their persecutors could destroy the body but never the soul. The coming of the Reign of God was inevitable and fear must not prevent the disciples from proclaiming it.

Fear should not prevent us from proclaiming the gospel and its demands. Jesus promises that we will never be alone in our efforts to do what is right. Rest assured, controversies will be part of our mission, but our final judgement before God will ultimately be based on our faithfulness to Christ and our call to love as Jesus loved.

If fear is the absence of love, then we have witnessed what *that* looks like in the events of the past several weeks. At the heart of injustice, poverty, hatred, bigotry, anger, racism, violence and so forth... is fear. If we allow fear to form our conscience, if we allow fear to trigger our actions and reactions, then one thing will feed into another and perpetuate more of the same. We all have wounds, scars, and scabs from the lack of love we have received from others. If we keep picking at them, they will never heal. If we keep re-opening the wounds they will become infected. When we shed our fear and look deep within ourselves with honesty, we will see that we're probably falling short of how we view those who are different than us. Remembering that we were all created in the image and likeness of a God whose Son was crucified for our sinfulness and has forgiven us, perhaps we can drop our defenses and love like he loved. There are three sides to every controversy: my side, their side, and Jesus' side.

