

October 20, 2024

Texts: John 8:12; Matthew 5:14-16

Introductory and Concluding Remarks – Thai Mission

Jesus speaks of himself as “the light of the world,” and whoever follows him will “have the light of life.” So often in our world today, we see so many areas of darkness and conflict and yet, let’s not forget that there are still many people, both near and far, who live in the light of Christ and share that light with others with joy and with compassion.

Acts of Christian love and service rarely make the news so it’s easy to think that no one cares about others anymore. But thank God for all who love Jesus and work to live their faith every day. There are even people who are bringing hope from Finland to Thailand with a little help from friends in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania. Many of you know what I’m talking about but if you don’t, you’re in the right place to hear of this ministry where God is working in the lives of young people.

Susan McCartney has told me that this is the twentieth year we have offered opportunities to sponsor students at this unique school in the rural areas of Thailand. That’s incredible! Think of what we have contributed to this mission over that time and how many lives have been better for it. And so I turn it over to Susan, asking at the same time that our children come forward and have a seat in the front rows and as there will be a video, the choir is welcomed to come out and sit where you can view it.

When I awoke this morning at 3:30 am which is when I normally get up on Sunday mornings and it was a full moon. Have you ever been out in the middle of the night with a full moon? It's not like daytime but it really lights us up at night.

The Chinese celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival at the time of a full moon on the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar usually falling in September or October. Maybe some of you know of this celebration.

Celebrations include eating mooncakes, playing with lanterns, and gazing at the moon. I understand in Thailand they have a festival called "Loy Krathong" which also falls on the date of the full moon usually in November.

There's something about a full moon when it's shining brightly through the night that acts for us and for other cultures as well, as a sign of hope. When you're in the midst of darkness and there is a bright light shining, illuminating our way, we feel more hopeful. A new moon doesn't do anything for us, does it? All you see the pitch black of night.

This two short passages we read this morning have always interested me especially when read together. In the first, Jesus declares that he is the "light of the world."

Light is symbolic throughout history for all that is good and right. To be "enlightened" is to receive a new truth so to speak. To "shine light on a subject" means to bring clarity and truth. Jesus is our light who came to show us the truth that God loves us and wants us to relate to him in a light-giving, enlightening relationship.

I am the “light of the world,” he says to us in the gospel of John 8:12. But later on in the gospel of Matthew 5:14 he says to his followers, “You are the light of the world.” And then he proceeds to tell them that they are to shine that light into the whole world. Like the moon illuminates the darkness, you and I, reflect the light of Christ to those around us.

You and I as followers of Christ are to shine our light in our homes, our church, our community, and when we have an opportunity, to the whole world.

And we have an opportunity to help sponsor the education for a young girl in Thailand, (Nattawadi Navahonawon). (*read her note?*) There is a basket in the narthex, in the back for donations. Please consider jumping in and being a part of this ministry that you’ve heard about this morning and if you have any additional questions about this, to please speak with Susan after the service. Amen.