

Waiting to Strike Gold
2016 Youth Sunday Sermon by Eric Grundt (VP)

Job 28:1-6, Where Wisdom Is Found

*'Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold to be refined.
Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.
Miners put an end to darkness, and search out to the farthest bound the ore in
gloom and deep darkness. They open shafts in a valley away from human
habitation; they are forgotten by travelers, they sway suspended, remote from
people. As for the earth, out of it comes bread; but underneath it is turned up as
by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires, and its dust contains gold.*

As my freshmen year of high school was coming to an end, it came time for me to begin looking for a job to work during the summer. I decided on getting a job at the camp that I used to go to as a kid. I always had great memories from going there, so I expected working there to be something that I enjoyed as well.

Oh, how wrong I was...That summer working was one of the most miserable and exhausting summers of my life. I give credit to all you parents who have to look over kindergarten age boys for more than one summer because that is an actual full time job. My group refused to stay organized and seemed to be some of the most disruptive kids at camp. I had to deal with anything from crying over someone not sharing to a seemingly endless amount of bathroom runs each day. Seriously, three times in one lunch period is just ridiculous. There were often times when the camp director tried to help, but the changes he made were never permanent and the kids always slipped into their old ways. By the end of the summer my patience was running low and I honestly did not think I would ever work there again.

However, when the next year of high school was wrapping up I was much more focused on school and didn't have the time to look for another job so I ended up working there again. This year was very different from the last. I had a group of kids that were first and second graders. I was nervous that it would basically be a repeat of the last summer as many of them were in my old group from the year before. To my surprise, in only one year they had incredibly matured. Instead of being disruptive during activities, they took them seriously and were even able to be competitive while still having fun. I began to have a

completely different outlook on the job and my days there became less and less of a burden.

The bible passage we just read talks about miners who search the farthest bounds of gloom and darkness for their ore. Though lonely, they all dug through the earth to find amazing sapphires. This year I learned how important it is to keep waiting and searching for the positives. Part of life is being able to toil and labor through the low points of your life until the dust clears and you strike gold. I believe that it is in these moments where we learn the most about ourselves. We are appreciative, compassionate and loving because of these times in our lives. As the VP and spiritual guide of PF this year, I have seen the powerful effects of faith and support within a group. In times where you find yourself struggling through a challenge, loss, or failure, I ask you to have faith and believe that something unique will bring you out of your darkness; it is only a matter of time. Amen.

Let Light Shine Out of Darkness
2016 Youth Sunday Sermon by Vandana Sampson (Sec)

2nd Corinthians 4: 6-12

For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

I've always struggled with the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" I remember the day so clearly, as if it were yesterday. I was taking an awful geometry test, one that I had spent hours studying for. It seemed like the absolute worst thing in the world, plus it was at 8 am in the morning! Who had the brain function to take a test that early? (Not me)

While I was wiping the sweat off my brow and working arduously through each problem, my teacher got a strange call on the telephone and turned on the news. The television screen began to show images of Sandy Hook Elementary, a school in Newtown that I had never really heard of before. Through the commotion of 30 disgruntled students, I was able to make out words such as “gunman” and “police” and “lockdown”. I wasn’t really sure what was going on, until I got to my next class and saw the confused and somber faces of my fellow classmates and teachers.

In the coming days, as more information was presented to the public, I learned that innocent first graders and adults were killed in one of the worst school shootings in American history. I was furious to say the least; this ate at me inside. The thought of the event made me nauseous and sick. I was upset with the world and I’m going to be completely honest, I blamed God. If He knows all things, why would He let something so tragic and inhumane happen in this world? My faith in God faltered and I was mortified at how something so awful could happen in this world. I remember wrestling with my conflicting emotions about faith, and talking about it with Pastor Jenn. I even wrote a song about it my freshman year for my confirmation project.

What I realized wasn’t as comforting as I would have liked. Not everything happens for a valid reason, I mean how could anyone justify the slaughter of innocent people, be it in our own backyard or halfway across the world? But I did learn to find the light in the darkness, and to take my experience and love of Christ and use it to better my life and the lives of people around me. In the passage that Christian read to us in the second Corinthians, we are told that God said *“Let light shine out of darkness.”* It is written, *“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”*

And these words ring true. God does not abandon us. Nor does he orchestrate the events of life. Bad things happen, but God teaches us to never stop loving one another, even in the face of tumult and terror. After the wake of Sandy Hook, I have seen communities come together, regardless of race or religious background. Our own town took in the students of Sandy Hook Elementary school, and support outpoured from communities around the world. The love and strength of humanity prevailed even in the most dark and trying of times. We were struck down, but not destroyed.

It's been almost four years since that awful day on December 14, 2012. And every day I am reminded to love to the best of my ability, to not take the things and the people in my life for granted, and to thank God every day for the support system he has given me in my family, my friends, and my church. As I get ready to make this huge transition in my life, and head off to college in a few months, I will take this gift of hope I received with me. I have learned to let the light shine out of darkness. Now I will perform for you the song I wrote for my confirmation project.

You Showed Me the Light

I have always believed in you my Lord, You have always carried me through the storms, You made me feel alright, even through the darkest night, but I admit there was a certain time, when the wind came in, the storm raged on I wondered why you let it happen, people died and children cried I was so mad, my world was blackened but...

Chorus:

You showed me the light, even when it's not bright, and now I know that you are everywhere I go, you taught me how to love, and your love is enough, to help me through life's maze, and all the terrifying days.

You are my father I am your child, You are my protector and my guide, You turned my world around, and put me back on solid ground but I admit, there was a certain time when the earth collapsed and the days were dark, I wondered why you let it happen my faith was tried, pain was intensified, I was so sad my world was blackened but... (Chorus)

Bridge:

When my faith is being shaken, and the troubles of the world can't be stopped but I'm awakened, and you showed me the way

You showed me the light, even when it's not bright, and now I know that you are everywhere I go, you taught me how to love, and your love is enough, to help me through life's maze, and all the terrifying days.

Lighthouses

2016 Youth Sunday Sermon by Noah Friend (Pres)

Mark 4:21-23

21 Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine. 22 For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light. 23 Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Let me tell you about this guy I know named Ralph. Ralph works in the city as a demolition worker and every day he must tear down buildings which other people have built that have become too old. He is quite good at his job; however, the townspeople only see him as one thing---a bad guy for knocking down their buildings. And of course there's a champion of the townspeople who rebuilds what Ralph had to take down, his name is Felix. And despite the fact that both are talented in what they do, Felix is dubbed the hero by the townspeople and Ralph, the bad guy whose talents---whose light---gets covered, concealed by the townspeople just because he does not do what they do or what they enjoy, just because he's different from them. Now just because that story was a Pixar Film called Wreck it Ralph, doesn't make it any less relatable!

All my life I too have felt different. Not necessarily in the way that Ralph had, I was never ostracized from the society but I have always struggled with finding confidence in who I was like he did, and I'm sure many of you have as well. I just wanted to blend in with the crowd, and quite frankly that quite difficult literally considering I have red hair. Perhaps it is because of the societal norm to dislike people who were unlike us or perhaps we just want to blend in with the crowd. But as I grew older and I gained more experiences I was able to muster more confidence in myself and stop trying to hide the fact that I was unique, because the truth is we're all very unique. We all have our own light, our own personality and our own presence. It was PF and this church that helped me to realize this truth. It really helped me become far more confident and it showed me that people can achieve great things when given the opportunity to shine their light.

This reminds me of a time on a mission trip my freshman year. Going into mission trip, I expected that the work which would be done on worksites would be physical, requiring difficult manual labor and incredible strength---something that I lacked as a freshman. But as I discovered the key to a successful worksite is not just the physical stamina of the workers but rather the combination of the talents of all of the workers.

We were on a site in North Carolina building shade structures for a rescue center called Paws4Ever. And while we were building, a member of our crew used his strengths differently than typical. He used a complex mathematical equation to determine exactly where we should cut the wood. And because of his unique approach, we saved a lot time, energy and resources on that site. While you might not think math is essential to a worksite, we discovered that when people are given the opportunity to use their strengths, to shine their light, great things can happen.

We all are our own people, have our own personalities and strengths---we all have our own personal light which we must shine. We all have this essence about us that the world needs to see because as Jesus taught us in the passage it would be foolish to hide our light or cover it. And we all have different talents---different types of lights---but that's not important, we need to be confident in what we have, stand proud and love our light and show it to the world! So, I'm going to choose to live by that familiar song we sang earlier: *This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.*

My grandmother, who passed away earlier this week, always had a great love for lighthouses, and much like a lighthouse she shown her personal light onto others. She always lit up a room whenever she entered, and never failed to put a smile on the face of everyone present. She used her light to make us all feel loved and encouraged us to shine our lights just as proudly as she did.

So I ask you to go, do as she did, carry on her legacy and shine your light proudly for the world to see and whenever possible, uncover the light of others so they too may shine and achieve great things. Go spread your light, your hope, your love. Because the world could use a little bit more light. Amen.