

CLEANSED BY THE LIGHT

John 1:1-18

Pastor William G. Carter tells the story about a boy named Tom, and a particular night when he was a teenager. He and his friends were walking around the neighborhood. It was a warm night and very dark. Suddenly one of them saw a police car and shouted. They hadn't done anything wrong, but they didn't want to be seen, either. So they began to run. The police car saw them and watched them turn down an alley. Tom tripped and knocked over some trashcans. The police officers got out the car and began to go after them. One of the officers turned on a searchlight. Tom looked around for his friends but didn't see them. All he saw was that burning, searing searchlight, looking for him.

Tom jumped behind those trashcans, only to find his friends huddled there. With frantic energy they tried to hide, pulling trash over their heads, and hoping to blend in. The spotlight fell on Tom. "Come out where we can see you," said the voice behind the light. Tom stood up where he was, covered in garbage.

"What are you doing?" said the voice.

Tom stammered, "Nothing."

The voice said, "I can't hear you. What are you doing?"

Tom said, "Officer, I wasn't doing anything wrong; I saw the light, I ran, I knocked over these garbage cans. I'm sorry about the disturbance." The searchlight was beaming into his eyes, blinding him. He stood there in the light with nowhere to hide.

Then the voice said, "I think I recognize you. Don't you live around the corner?"

"Yes," he stammered. His heart was racing, and he thought to himself, "My life is ruined. If I don't get arrested for disturbing the peace, something worse will happen: this officer is going to tell my parents."

But then the voice behind the light said something unexpected. "Son, I'm not here to punish you; I'm here to protect you." As he stood before that searchlight, Tom says he caught a glimpse of what it means to stand before Jesus, who is the Light of the World. There he was, fully exposed yet completely protected. He was fully revealed, yet free from unnecessary punishment. He stood hip-deep in garbage, yet cleaner than he had ever felt, somehow cleansed by a light that cast no shadow. In that moment, he saw something of what it means to stand in the presence of Jesus Christ, who is full of truth and full of grace. May we be covered in the light of Christ.

God bless,
Pastor Barbara