



# Simple Gifts

Words to Inspire the Spirit

IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

July 13, 2021

## The Armor of Light

By The Rev. Susan D. Parsons

When I was a young girl in Oklahoma, my great love – besides the slightly older boy two houses down – was summer. And though I loved hanging out and playing all day with the neighborhood kids, the best part of the day was evening when we all gathered after dinner at my house to play “Werewolf.”

“Werewolf,” a game we invented ourselves, was basically hide-and-seek with a werewolf thrown in – probably because we’d all seen the werewolf movie. Richard, the boy two doors down, played the werewolf and every other kid in the neighborhood simply ran off into the dark and hid.

The werewolf would howl ominously as he stalked through the dark looking for someone to tag. Generally, just because he howled, we would run screaming from our perfect safety in one of the abundant bushes in the neighborhood which allowed him to chase us around howling. If he were able to tag us, we were taken to his secret den – often right under some unfortunate’s window – where we were stuck unless and until someone came and untagged us and saved us from the clutches of the werewolf.

Just imagine the patience our parents and neighbors must have summoned to tolerate the screaming, howling, and yelling that was part of what should have been gentle, peaceful summer nights.

Eventually our front porch evolved into a designated “safe” zone, a place where all of us kids could go and hang out if we got winded (or, indeed, scared) and the werewolf/Richard couldn’t get us. Though it wasn’t one of those large southern porches, it did have a porch light and a couple of chairs. It also had June bugs. Our June bugs – the brown sort – were less than an inch long, a bit crusty, and had six tiny thread-like legs. They flew in by the hundreds from all over it seemed, attracted by the light on the porch.

Thankfully, they didn’t bite because they weren’t shy about landing on whatever was handy as they flew in and around the light and then settled wherever they could, even if it were on someone’s shoulder or head. They weren’t graceful, so sometimes they fell down your shirt.

I wish all of life could be like those summer evenings. They come back to me as dreamy, starlit, joyful moments in time. Wouldn’t it be glorious if stepping out into the dark and scary world was as safe as we were, when our biggest threat was being caught by a make-believe werewolf and simply sitting in the dark for a few minutes until your friends came to “save” you, or your mom called you in because it was getting late.

And where “safety” meant simply running to the light on the front porch where the biggest problems were wobbly chairs and harmless, clumsy beetles and mosquito bites.

Though the world is a scary place and horrible things happen, as followers of Jesus we are called to tell people about the light we have found.

We are called to be people who are trying to alleviate fear and suffering to protect, to feed, to nurture, to build up our neighbors – and remember, everyone is our neighbor – to remind them of the light. And we do this because we know Jesus.

And we aren’t alone in our efforts. We have the comfort and care of others who are working with us. We need to gather on the porch, every week, in

what is our “safety,” to be restored, renewed, refreshed. The chairs are not as comfortable as one would wish, but there are no crusty June bugs. And, thanks be to God, there is light – “the armor of light.”

From Paul’s Letter to the Romans, we are reminded:

the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:12-14).