

18 December 2011 – Lessons and Carols at St. Mary's Chapel
Pastor Shelley Cunningham

Will not day come soon? Will not day come soon?

How many times have those words been uttered in these halls; this prayer lifted up by those whose hearts are heavy and for whom the nights seem endless?

Even at a place such as the Mayo Clinic, where the doctors and nurses are among the finest in the world, night still comes. It comes for those who wait by the bedside of a loved one. It comes for those who are trying to adjust to a new 'normal.' It comes for those whose families and churches and support systems are miles away. And when night comes, the darkness presses in and our vision fades to black. If you have ever lain awake in the middle of the night, you know that it is there that worry swells like a mountain and fear threaten to consume every last ounce of hope. And though it be no more than a whisper, the night silence can be deafening. Will not day come soon?

To those aching for the dawn, scripture speaks words of hope:

Psalm 30: Weeping lasts for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Lamentations 3: God's mercies never fade away, they are new every morning.

Romans 8: Nothing – not height nor depths, not illness nor health, not night or darkness or despair can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus

Revelation 21: Behold, I am coming soon.

God's people often find themselves lost. Indeed, the Christmas story tells of those who were lost in the night: Mary and Joseph, as they traveled far from home and far from those they loved; the shepherds keeping watch as they carefully guarded against danger; the magi as they scanned the skies for a sign that God was on the move. They all faced the darkness with blind faith – trust that God was their companion in the night.

Yes, though we may feel lost, we are never alone. Poet Brian Wren writes:

Spirit of God, you open doors that are locked, break the shackles of slavery,
tirelessly search for the lost until they are found.

You give us life, and whisper in our hearts, “you are God’s beloved child,
and always will be.”

Deep in every human heart, you plant a seed of promise, a glimmer of
expectation, a spark of hope.

And because you give us breath, we praise you.

Do not give up on us when we let go of hope, surrender to disappointment,
drift into aimlessness or sink into gloom and despair.

Stir in us dreams of new possibilities, dreams of days when worry and pain
and tears will be no more.

Hear our prayer for all who wait in hope; for all who long to find joy beyond
sorrow, healing beyond hurt, peace beyond conflict, and dawn after dark
night.

Resurrect the health of bodies bruised and broken. Fan into flame the spark
of energy in caregivers racked with tiredness. Breathe and blow into each
spirit the gifts of patience, kindness, humility, gentleness, self-control.

For we trust, O Lord, that you carry us when we are weary. You come to bring
possibility. And you pour out on us your peace.

The Son of God came for those who are lost in the night ... which is all of us at some
time or another. He came because the love of God reaches everywhere – even to a
sterile hospital room, even to a lowly stable. He came for everyone so that the whole
world might know God’s love. He came for you.

The message of Christmas is that the light is breaking. Dawn is arising. God’s love will
find you wherever you are. Take heart. Day is coming soon.