

During the darkest days of the Civil War, the hopes of the Union army were fading. The leaders of the Union turned to President Abraham Lincoln for guidance and encouragement. When the delegation was assembled, Lincoln told the following story. (pause)

"Years ago, a young friend and I were out one night when a shower of meteors fell from the clear November sky. The young man was frightened, but I told him to look up in the sky past the shooting stars to the fixed stars beyond, shining serene in the firmament. I said, 'Let us not mind the meteors, but let us keep our eyes on the stars.'"

In times of trouble we need to keep our focus on the one true light, the light of God. For the light of God is lasting and sure. By limiting our focus, we see only the meteors which represent the fears and anxieties of life that challenge us.

Today there are many folks who feel as though they live in darkness or that life is so chaotic they are being showered with fears and anxieties. We fear the escalating price of fuel. We have doubts

about raising our children in a complex and cruel world. The rapid changes in technology overwhelm us. Fear of all the things a pandemic brings and we have all been living through. These are just a few of the many fears and anxieties we face. It's overwhelming. **How do we find our way? (pause)**

In Genesis, we read that God created light in the midst of darkness. "Let there be light," God said, and there was light. Somehow, God created the heavens and earth out of total chaos. (pause)

Perhaps chaos is not all bad. We tend to be fearful when things are chaotic. We long for order and harmony. We don't like to be caught off guard. We go to great lengths to create an environment where we are safe, immune to disaster and protected from anything out of the ordinary. Chaos is perceived as stressful, harmful or even evil. Yet, it was from chaos that God created the earth.

Some folks are terrified of computers. And modern technology is changing so rapidly there are others who feel they are living in the dark

ages. I have a cell phone which is 4 or 5 years old and it's all but obsolete. It took me three months to figure out how to operate the one I have and that's only because my girls have a lot of patience.

(pause)

A few years ago, I received a new digital camera. It is the first one I have ever owned. On the box, it said it is simple to use. "Yeah, right!" I was struggling to operate the camera when Carm suggested that I read the directions. I had to set my pride aside. They were complete with pictures and a step by step process. I finally discovered how to operate the camera, but not without a little guidance.

Just as Lincoln guided his leaders and gave them hope and encouragement reading the directions helped me find my way. The creation story in Genesis is about God speaking. God is giving us directions and helping us find our way.

People are really worried about the cost of living. Prices continue to rise and salaries don't often follow that trend. Everything it seems, is getting more expensive. Our society is becoming more and more

diverse. Our traditions are being threatened by other cultural norms and practices. Everything is changing. **How do we find our way?**

**(pause)**

God created the world out of chaos. Therefore, chaos must be the forerunner of creativity. By resisting chaos, we can prevent creativity. By embracing chaos, we can enable creativity.

Recently, we looked around our house. As it happens during this time of year, everything gets messy. There were Christmas gifts scattered around the house. New things had not yet found a home. There were boxes, cards and decorations. There was unread newspapers and mail. During the holidays, we just didn't get to everything. For Carm and I, the messiness of our house wasn't comforting. So, we did some cleaning, and some things got put away, others got pitched. Suddenly our house didn't seem so chaotic. It just needed a little order. When we have a little order in our life, we have light to find our way. (pause)

God created day and night. God created the sea and dry land. God created male and female. God gave us opposites, things that are in direct contrast with one another. God gave us checks and balances. In this regard, order has to do with ebb and flow. Nothing is absolute and the rules that apply to the night are different than the rules that apply to the day. That being said, too much order can inhibit our ability to be creative.

I believe that what God created was a sense of balance. Our lives need to be offset by opposites. Work is offset by play. Alertness is offset by sleep. Seriousness is offset by humor. The way to bring some order to our chaotic lives is to strive for balance. (pause)

We can also find our way when we permit the light within ourselves shine for others. In the book, Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work, there is a story of a young man who some years ago started a dime store business in a small town. He was a good man, honest and friendly. When he reached a very old age he found himself lying in a hospital bed, dying.

The man summoned his three adult children to his bedside. His business had become successful and he wanted one of his children to take over as the future president of the company. He gave them each a dollar bill and told them to go out and buy whatever they wanted. But, whatever they bought it had to fill the room from corner to corner.

His children accepted the challenge willingly. Each was excited for the opportunity to lead the family business. The first child returned with two bales of hay. He took the hay and threw it in the air, filling the room with hay. But, in a few moments the hay settled on the floor. The second child returned with two pillows. He tore open the pillows and feathers filled the room. But, after a few moments they too settled on the floor.

The third child returned and the father said, "And what did you bring?" He answered, "Well, Dad, I took the dollar to the store and got change. I invested 50 cents, gave 20 cents to the church and 20 cents to charity. I took the remaining dime and bought two things; a candle and a pack of matches." He then lit the candle with a match, reached

over and turned off the lights in the room and the room was filled with light. “Well done, my son. You will be the president of my company,” said the father.

Like the man’s son, each of us has a light to shine. A single flame can light the way for someone in darkness. A single act of kindness, a word of encouragement can make the difference, helping others to find their way. We can find our way too with a little order in our lives. But, let us never fear chaos for chaos can lead to creativity and growth.

Amen.