



**Universal Worship Service**  
**Sermon, *Kindling the Light***  
**December 6, 2020**

A monastic chant called the Taizé prayer says, “Within our darkest night you kindle a fire that never dies away.”

Travel in your imagination to the time of our earliest ancestors, when there was not yet the discovery of a human-made light source, not even the light of a flame.

It is the time of day when the light of the sun has receded and the darkness of night shrouds the earth. Imagine the vulnerability of human life in this darkness; sight is dimmed and potential dangers lurk in the shadows. Wary and cautious throughout the night, our ancestors likely waited for that first glow of morning light.

We might imagine that with the rising of the sun into full brilliance they experienced a feeling of assurance, of hope, of awe in the light that makes life possible.

Certainly we can connect to these uplifting feelings that arise with gazing upon a glorious view of the rising sun, stirring in us a feeling of a benevolent source, a belief in a source of life greater than ourselves.

*Belief...Belief in God is the fuel.*

We hear this in the Hindu hymn to the Sun, the radiant God, Surya, whose ray impels every movement in life, whose light scatters darkness and gloom, bringing joy to every eye!

We hear this in the sutra to the Buddhas who are blazing glorious suns, dispelling darkness and suffering with their light of compassion.

Now Imagine that moment in time when our ancestors first kindled a spark that burst into a flame of light, Fire!

The wonderment and elation that must have been felt at the magical mystery of the Source that kindled that spark of inspiration, the Source that realized this luminous flame.

Fire, banishing the darkness with light, evolving new possibilities for livelihood and life. Fire, a source of light that our ancestors circled around for safety and sustenance, unifying them in community. We might imagine that they were enraptured, glorifying the One brilliant Source of Light whose ray kindled that flame.

Belief in the mystery and power of Light, adulation and devotion to this Light, the sustainer of Life – Sun and Fire!

We hear and feel the glow of devotion in the Zoroastrian Hymn to the son of Ahura Mazda, Fire, praying that fire may be provided with proper fuel; the fuel of our belief, so that Fire may be ever this burning in this house.

This house, our heart...burning with devotion...*Love of God is the Glow*

In the northern regions of the earth, we are in the season preceding the winter solstice. On this winter day, imagine we are living in medieval times. The light of the sun is shadowed by gray clouds and the veil of falling snow. Day light quickly wanes and swells into the harsh cold darkness of winter's night. For warmth, we gather closely with family, encircling the one source of light, fire, kindled in the hearth of our home.

During the dark winter and holy days of Christmas, it was a medieval celtic custom to toss sprigs of holly onto a burning in the hearth—the yule log.

It was believed that this burned away bad feelings between family, friends or neighbors and fostered the glow of harmony.

We might remember our own experiences of circling around a fire in the dark chill of night with family and friends. As we gaze upon the flame, the heart of the fire's glow kindles this light in our heart. We feel a warmth there, a happiness in kinship with those gathered in this light, the glow of harmony.

Throughout time human beings have had this need to kindle a flame, not only for light in the darkness and for sustenance in outer life, but also for sustenance in our inner life.

For this inner sustenance, we have created rituals for kindling the light to foster the glow of harmony, the glow of hope and love that dispels the dark clouds within.

In Hindu religious traditions, there is the grand celebration of Diwali, an enlivening ceremony of kindling lights in temples, homes and along the river Ganga. It is a ritual tribute to that Source of Light that dispels the darkness in life by awakening the hope and joy of this Light in the heart of one's being.

In the Jewish tradition during the holy days of Hanukkah, the light is kindled on the candles of the menorah. This commemorates the miracle of the oil, a miracle of light that occurred during the rededication of the holy temple in Jerusalem.

As the miracle is told, during this ceremony, the lamp that was kindled each day to keep the eternal flame burning had only a one-day supply of oil. However, when the oil in the lamp was lit, the flame burned continuously for eight days.

This miracle instills hope and belief in God. The ritual lighting of the menorah kindles devotion, Love for God, the source of all light, Divine Light.

In the Christian tradition, five candles are lit during the holy days of Advent preceding Christmas. As the wick of each candle is lit, the light of hope, the light of love, the light of joy and the light of peace is kindled in our heart and for the heart of the world.

The fifth candle, lit on Christmas Day, celebrates the One Source of all these qualities of light, the flame of Divine Light that shines in this world through the son of God, Jesus.

In the Islamic tradition, a lamp continually burns in the mosque invoking remembrance of the Light upon Light that is God, Divine Light.

*Realization of God is the flame of Divine Light.*

The Jewish, Christian and Islamic scripture teach us that the Light dwells in God; that when our bodies—our hearts are lamps of the everlasting light of God, we will have the Light of Life to uplift and guide us through the darkest times.

It is the light of the oil that shines even if no fire touches it, offering hope and trust—belief in God. It is the continual flame ever-burning in this house, the Love of God glowing in our heart.

Turning to the flames of light glowing on the altar, remember; from the central candle, representing the One Source of All Light, we light each candle representing the Light of these world religions saying, “we kindle the light”.

During these times, when our worldwide human family lives amidst many outer conditions of darkness that are a cause of confusion, doubt, fear, pain, loss and grief, inner darkness; may we kindle the light of these teachings. May we discover the ritual that kindles the flame of Divine Light in our heart.

Let us turn toward the sun, O Surya, and tune to the vitality, the vibrance of the light that shines even when clouded by darkness without and within.

We breathe in this vibrance, the joyful optimism of light, kindling this light in our physical body, and in the lamp of our spiritual body, our heart.

We feel the warmth of this inner flame rise in a feeling of harmony, a glow of Love emanating from the One ever-burning source of light, the flame of Divine Light.

With glorification radiating from this inner glow of Love, we offer our reverence and gratitude that it may continually fuel the flame of Divine Light in our heart.

We pray that Divine Light may be realized within us and shine forth in Love, kindling the light in the heart of our human family with hope, optimism, joy!

“Within our darkest night you kindle a fire that never dies away.”