

Monday 7/9 Noon

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105

I invite you to close your eyes. Breathe deep, let the air out all the way. Picture yourself on a path...the path you have been on has been pretty smooth. You left home with plenty of energy, and excitement for the adventure ahead. But you've been on the path for a few days now. In your mind's eye, you can see that the road is getting weird and rocky...you see some dark woods ahead, and it looks like rain. Invite God to be present. Invoke the power of God to be a lamp to your feet and a light upon your path. Rest in this for a moment or two. I will ring the bell when it's time to open your eyes.

When we last saw our Heroine, she had made the decision to follow the call from God and set out from home. All that is familiar is now far behind her, but the destination is not yet even a remote possibility. And things are starting to get annoying. She has rocks in her shoes. She starts to worry that she doesn't have the necessary provisions. The adventure she felt so sure about is starting to feel like a grind. And now the path has entered a dark wood...and who knows what kinds of monsters are hiding in there? The light gets dim, and just as the path gets hard to see, there start to be boulders and tree branches to stumble over.

Our Heroine meets ogres and trolls in the woods, creatures who try to dissuade her from her chosen journey. They play on her worst fears: "Why-ever did you leave home? Don't you realize how inconvenient it is for everybody that you left on this quest? Who do you think you are, doing something like this at your age?" Our Heroine feels guilty sometimes. Maybe she is dealing with grief, or depression, or discouragement along the way. Sometimes the ogres and trolls get the upper hand and she loses faith. She may feel that the joy has drained out of life, and she feels indifferent. She feels lost, but has no choice but to keep going.

When children are little the grownups who love them will often teach them something that sounds like this: "If you get lost and are afraid, just stay in one place. Stay where you are and I will find you." Mr. Fred Rogers said it this way: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

When we are lost and can't see our way, we need to remember: God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. When we are lost in the Fire Swamp (in the Christian tradition we know this as the *dark night of the soul*), it's smart to stop, look around and

listen. Take stock. Look for the helpers. Practice kindness. Figure out where we are and what might be the next true step to take. Remember Anne Lamott's metaphor of standing in the light, and watching for the next circle of light to appear. This is how God brings us home.

Let us pray. Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers. Be present, O merciful God, and protect us, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*