

I saw a perfect shooting star for the first time in my life this past Wednesday night. I saw the whole process, I watched as it appeared, the dazzling streak of light and then watched it disappear all within a matter of seconds. In the past I've only ever seen the very tail end of a shooting star, which always lead me to question whether I in fact did see what I thought I saw. Wednesday's encounter was unmistakable. It was the biggest, clearest, shooting star I've ever seen and it occurred right above my house as I was taking the trash to the curb.

This might seem like an insignificant coincidence to most of you. But that's because you don't know about my personal awakening about the night sky. I have always known that our sun is a star... what was never made clear to me until a few months ago was that pretty much all stars are suns of different sizes and intensities. It's not hyperbole when I say that this news landed like a thunderbolt in my soul— Because if stars are suns, then that means when I'm looking at the night sky I'm not just seeing individual stars as I once thought, I'm seeing individual suns. And for me, I can't explain it but that changed everything. My night sky is now so much more than it once was. My night sky is full of suns. Something that was always true, but now I know it.

I get why the church accused Galileo of heresy. Changing the shape of the universe and having your place in it shrink, is very unsettling – to say the very least.

Which is why I was looking at the night sky on trash night in the first place. Because now I'm a person who does that. Now I look at the night sky and ask questions and ponder its mysteries in ways I never have before. Which leads to the most basic observation of all – The other night, I saw the shooting star for no other reason than because I was actually looking at the sky. How many shooting stars have I missed simply because I was not looking at the sky.

That shooting star felt like a wink from the Creator. Ah-Ha – Amy your eyes are open, just you wait. This is just the beginning and you haven't seen anything yet.

Sound familiar? This is pretty much the exact message that Jesus shares with Nathaniel in this week's Gospel. Just you wait, because you haven't seen anything yet....

When I think about Nathaniel – I'm a little jealous. I need to see shooting stars and the heavens in new ways.... Nathaniel just needed Jesus to see him under a fig tree to get that something momentous was happening. What about Nathaniel makes him able to see with such clarity even in the midst of mundane, simple things? Why did he have eyes to see Jesus as the Son of God after such a simple experience? Well the text gives us the greatest clue of all. John's gospel tells us that Nathaniel and his friends were actually looking for the Messiah. Philip greets Nathaniel by exclaiming to him "We found him about whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote." Not a stretch to then claim that Nathaniel was able to see Jesus as the Son of God rather quickly because Nathaniel was looking for nothing less than the Son of God. He was looking for something extraordinary, for something that made his soul come alive. He was looking and expecting that God would keep God's promise. And so when Jesus showed up, when what he was looking for arrived his eyes were already open and he was able to see.

This happens time and again in life. Whether it be shooting stars in night skies, or love made manifest when we seek it out... When our eyes are open to something, we see it.

Seeing the the long-awaited Son of God, seeing a shooting star in a night sky – these are things one longs to see. What about when the thing that comes into view is something we had not wished to see?

For millions upon millions of Americans, the insurrection at the Capitol last week was a sight both expected and unexpected at the exact same time. For how did we expect America's dance with White Supremacy to play out? Can anyone really be surprised that a violent worldview founded on domination and dehumanization propelled a bunch of entitled angry people to storm a legislative body that threatens them with talk of liberty and justice for all. Not if your eyes were open.

The Storming of the capitol was a heart-breaking, soul-shaking, eye-opening event in the psyche of America.

As painful as that was – here in lays the gift. For the first time in a long time, we are all looking at the night sky together. All across this country a greater majority

than ever before is saying I see it! White Supremacy is alive and well and poses a grave danger to all that we hold most dear.

With his characteristic clarity, Ibram X. Kendi summed up the moment we now find ourselves in September's issue of *The Atlantic*. He writes "THE AMERICA THAT denied its racism through the Obama years has struggled to deny its racism through the Trump years.

It has become harder, in the Trump years, to blame Black people for racial inequity and injustice. It has also become harder to tell Black people that the fault lies with them, and to urge them to improve their station by behaving in an upstanding or respectable manner. In the Trump years, the problem is obvious, and it isn't Black people's behavior."

Friends, for the first time in a long time, our eyes are looking in the same direction and we can see. Don't you see... this is actually. This is good news. So sure all around us the news of the day seems bleak. There are those who would profess that our country is in shambles and all hope has been lost. I say nothing can be further from the truth. Hope has not been lost. Hope is being found.

We cannot address what ails us if we cannot acknowledge it. We cannot change course, we cannot correct wrongs if we are unwilling even to utter the wrong's existence. These days pundits, politicians, school children – they are shouting what ails us from the rafters. We can see, and so we can do something about it. As much as today as today, we are in a better place than we were before.

I want to go back to Ibram Kendi's words because he lays out the possibility, the realistic hopefulness found even now in these dark days. I want to end with Kendi's own ending to his article -

Americans can realize that they are at a point of no return. No returning to the bad old habit of denial. No returning to cynicism. No returning to normal—the normal in which racist policies, defended by racist ideas, lead to racial inequities. [...]

The abolition of slavery seemed as impossible in the 1850s as equality seems today. But just as the abolitionists of the 1850s demanded the immediate eradication of slavery, immediate equality must be the demand today. Abolish police violence. Abolish mass incarceration. Abolish the racial wealth gap and the gap in school funding. Abolish barriers to citizenship. Abolish voter suppression. Abolish health disparities. Not in 20 years. Not in 10 years. Now.”

The time we live in is pregnant with possibility friends. This is not a time for hand-wringing or despair. This is a time of great hope and possibility. May we have the eyes to see the moment for what it is and the courage to not look away. Amen.