

## The Light for Dark Corners

Text: Number 21:4-9

Ephesians 2:1-10 (Series B, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent) Ps. 107:1-3, 17-22

John 3:14-21

*"...The light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. But those who do what is true, come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God"*  
(John 3:19-21).

Let us pray

This morning I will attempt to share a few thoughts with you on *Light*. There are a whole series of answers to the question, "*How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb?*"

- ❖ Roman Catholics: None. They only use candles.
- ❖ Anglicans: Two; one to call the electrician, and one to talk about how much better the old one was.
- ❖ Pentecostals: Ten; one to change the bulb, and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.
- ❖ Baptists: At least 15; one to change the light bulb, and three committees to approve the change.
- ❖ Lutherans: None. Lutherans don't believe in change. Ha! Ha!!

Light is a wonderful creation of God. It is very important for our happiness and for our survival. It is with light that we are able to see the world around us. It is everywhere; it determines everything we see. Light is the conveyor of shape and colour; it is the swiftest carrier of energy in the universe.

Nothing can move faster than the speed of light. And since the invention of the laser beam in the 1960s and its ever-increasing application by doctors as they slice away cancers, by dentists as they cut out decay, and by the armed forces as they accurately aim weapons, it may well be that nothing is more powerful than light, as well. Light is a very practical thing. It also makes plants green by photosynthesis.

Do you know that light picks up water from the sea and wafts it over the land to fall as rain? We like light. It is a source of joy. When light beams from the sun, it brings smiles to sad faces. Light feels good to pale bodies lying on the beach. On the other hand, when we get up in the middle of the night, the lack of light can cause us a good deal of pain as we walk into half-open doors or stub our toes on furniture.

And yet there are times when there is too much light. It exposes corners that had previously been hidden. You know, it's a bit like those dark spots around our homes - behind a cupboard, under the fridge, under the bed - and it's only when they are moved and you see those spots in the light of day that you see just how much dirt has accumulated there in the dark. At first we are embarrassed at so much dirt and dust, and then we set about cleaning it up. I suppose if we didn't care about the dirt, we would just ignore it and push the furniture back. We would pretend that we didn't see it.

There are so many dark corners in our world today. There is the dark world of child pornography, the dark world of poverty and of environmental irresponsibility, the dark world of a lack of purpose and identity among so many people of today, and the dark world of war where people are maimed and killed senselessly. And it's so easy to pretend that these dark corners don't exist or to look the other way, telling ourselves that those dark spots aren't really our problem.

In today's text from the gospel of John, we are told: "*Light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil*" - like a room that looks neater and cleaner in the dark. In the dark, you can't see the dust and the cobwebs. You can't see the old newspapers thrown aside. You can't see the dirty marks on the walls. You can't see how dirty the curtains are or what condition the furniture is in.

The person who owns the room may be someone whom you would expect to be neat and tidy. But turn on the light and all of the dirt is exposed and, immediately, you have been given a completely different picture of the person who lives here.

Jesus is the Light. He came into the world not to condemn but to bring life. It is only as those dark private corners of our lives are exposed, that we can be helped. It is in the light of God's Word that we are faced with the reality that we have dark corners of sin in our lives that need tidying.

We are suddenly shaken by the realization that we are sinners. Everything is not as neat and tidy as we thought. There is a mess that needs to be cleaned up, and even though we have tried to hide the mess in the darkest and most private corner of our lives, the light of Jesus has shown us that there is dirt piled up there that needs cleaning out - our temptations, those faults that we would prefer not to admit to, the poor way we have treated the people we love, and our selfish attitude when it comes to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Light, Jesus, has come into the world not to bring condemnation, but to bring salvation, to bring healing and reconciliation. This gift is freely ours. "Come," says the Light of the Word, "you are my daughters; you are my sons. You are forgiven; you are accepted. Come and enjoy light and life. Bask in the beauty and warmth of the sun - the Son of God." "*For God so loved the world*" - that means you. God loved you so much that he sent his only Son so that you may believe and have eternal life.

God's love for us may be free, and it certainly is freely given. But it cost God a great deal. It cost him the life of his Son. It meant raising the Light of the world up on a rough-hewn cross - for the world. Jesus spoke about this in the gospel reading: "*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life*" (John 3:14). In John's Gospel, the height of Jesus' glory is on the cross. Jesus refers to his suffering and death in this way. "*Now is the Son of Man glorified*" (John 13:31) - Strange words.

One would think that the Gospel writer would have referred to the resurrection or to the ascension as the center point of Jesus' glory. No, for John, the pinnacle of Jesus' glory is when he is lifted up on the cross. The moment when God is most glorified and Jesus is glorified is when he gives himself as a sacrifice for others. Jesus gave his life like the Passover lamb which was slain to save the lives of God's people.

Glory in suffering; that's so different to our way of thinking these days. We glory in power, prestige, wealth, success, and fame. We love it. We strive for it. We yearn for it. Everyone likes a successful person. Everyone likes to be successful.

But the Gospel of John states that true glory does not come from prestige, power, fame or wealth, but from the supreme sacrifice for others. Nowhere does God's love burn more deeply, nowhere does God's light shine more brightly; nowhere does God's grace come through more clearly than on the cross.

Freely the light of his forgiveness shines into our lives brightening up every corner, forgiving every sin, restoring our relationship with God, renewing our lives. Whoever follows Jesus will not walk in darkness. They will experience the joy and peace of sins forgiven, of new attitudes to work, to school, to leisure, to our world, to our bodies, and of new relationships with family and friends.

We are in the Lenten season, a time of preparation for the Passion of our Lord, a time for reflecting on why our Lord had to go to such extremes to save us. And this is why? He wants to clean the dirt hidden away in every corner of our lives.

Today, our readings remind us that God has done something about this dirt. Paul says, in Ephesians, *"In our natural condition we, like everyone else, were destined to suffer God's anger. But God's mercy is so abundant, and his love for us is so great, that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience, he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God's grace that you have been saved"* (Eph. 2:3b-5).

Jesus died for us to get rid of the dirt that we accumulate in our lives once and for all. Thank God for the saving grace of our Saviour.

Finally, just one last point; during this COVID-19 pandemic, God has shone his marvelous light and power in the lives of our front-line workers who are dealing with this devastating virus. These folks need our praise and encouragement. Well done! We are with you!

Jesus shines his light into our lives; he fills us with his love and forgiveness. He fills us with the joy and knowledge of freedom from guilt for the things that upset us, comfort for our times of sadness, joy at the healing we experience between each other.

The light that shines in our lives ought to bring blessing to others. We are to let this light of Christ shine through us into the dark corners of the lives of the people around us -

- ❖ the dark corner of a depressed and despondent person,
- ❖ the dark corner of an unhappy person,
- ❖ the dark corner of fear and depression,
- ❖ the dark corner of a person who needs to hear the comforting words of our Saviour.

The light you give to that person can dispel the darkness from that person's life and bring to him/her a completely new outlook. Don't underestimate what the light of Christ can do through you. As Jesus said: *"You are the light of the world .... Your light must shine before people so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14,16). St. Peter reflects the words of Jesus when he says, *"God has called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light"* (1Peter 2:9).

**Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:**

- Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross # 335
- Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land # 333
- When I Survey the Wondrous Cross # 803

**Prayer concerns:**

- *Ingeborg Eidnes*
- *Matilda Molyneau-Piper*
- *COVID-19 Frontline workers.*

**Let us pray:** Good and Redeeming Lord, invigorate our faith and inspire us in our repentance to acknowledge and accept Your free gift of Grace, that our souls may not perish in sin, but thrive in Your eternal life. We ask through Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ; and the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit; Who live and reign with You as One God, now, in the ages to come, and forever. **Amen.**

Happy Birthday!

Birthdays: *Dodridge McFarlane*

**Good News from the Government of Quebec:**

**In-person worship (with a maximum of 25 persons) starts on March 26, which means there will be an Easter Celebration this year. Praise God! Palm Sunday will be our first day back (March 28). No Maundy Thursday service due to curfew, but there will be Good Friday service at the regular time 11:00 a.m. No Easter Breakfast in Church, but hey ..... you may have one at home before the Resurrection Celebration. Thank you all for your patience.**

March 14, 2021