

“Who or What is the Light?”

Sermon by Dan Harrison, Pastor, Church of the Covenant, Lynchburg, VA 3/14/21

John 3:19-20

Who or what is the light? I think this a good question to start with this morning. It challenges us to dig deep within ourselves to discover the answer. Some will say we must dig deep into God’s Word for the answer. Well we know from scripture (John 1:1-5) that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He (Jesus) was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (*En el principio era el Verbo, y el Verbo era con Dios, y el Verbo era Dios. Este era en el principio con Dios. Todas las cosas por él fueron hechas, y sin él nada de lo que ha sido hecho, fue hecho. En él estaba la vida, y la vida era la luz de los hombres. La luz en las tinieblas resplandece, y las tinieblas no prevalecieron contra ella.*)

In this case it seems Jesus is both the light and the Word, which makes the psalmist’s claim that “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” even more powerful (Psalm 119:105). But let’s not stop there. Jesus told Nicodemus that this is the “verdict” or this is the “final result”: Light has come into the world. Then Jesus tells him, “However people prefer darkness because they do evil and remain hidden.”

A lot of us automatically go to the sins in our own lives, the things that gnaw on us, make us most ashamed: The deeper, more secretive aspects of our lives that we don’t want anyone to know about, but Jesus’ focus seemed to be on something a bit more tangible than that, I believe. Jesus was getting to the core of Nicodemus’ own struggle. Remember, Nicodemus, a religious leader, had gone to Jesus secretly under the cover of night. Why? For fear of what? To be exposed as a follower of Jesus. His own shame. Hypocrisy.

Who is the light? We can understand that Jesus is often referred to as the light. He even said, “I am the light of the world, and those who follow me shall not walk in darkness. (John 8:12)”

But Jesus also tells us, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matthew 5:14-16)” Jesus takes who he is, the light, and reflects this fact back on to us. Now, we are the light. We are one. What I am you are, and what you are I am. Jesus said “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30), and Jesus said we are one if we remain in him (John 15).

Many might ask themselves: What are the benefits of light?

1. Warmth – when the light hits our skin a feeling of “life” consumes us, right?
2. Clear Sight – in light we can see (we’re not stumbling around)
3. Honesty – we can’t hide anything anymore, we remain ultimately vulnerable
4. Community – there is unity in light; there is isolation in darkness

Nicodemus didn’t understand this yet. He didn’t understand the benefits. He came in darkness, and he came alone. Jesus said he would have to be born again to see the light, born in “water and

spirit,” a true transformation in his thinking. He’d have to reject darkness and embrace light, becoming light in darkness.

My encouragement for us is to reject darkness in our own lives. Reject the animosity, the jealousy, the selfishness, the bitterness, the divisiveness. It’s not worth it. Instead, replace it with light. Breathe it in, expelling the things that separate us. Let us find communion together. Let us create community in the light.

Shalom