

## Sermon – The Light

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1 John 1:5-10

A man and his wife are awakened at 3 o'clock in the morning by a loud pounding on their door. The man gets up and goes to the door where a drunken stranger in the pouring rain is asking for a push.

"Not a chance" says the husband - "It's three o'clock in the morning!"  
He slams the door and returns to bed.

"Who was it?" asks his wife. "Just a drunken stranger asking for a push" he answers.

"Did you help him?" She asks.

"No, I didn't-it's three in the morning and it's raining out."

"Well, you've got a short memory" says his wife. "Can't you remember about three months ago when we broke down on vacation and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him."

The man does as he is told and gets dressed and goes out into the pouring rain and calls out into the dark.

"Hello-are you still there?"

"Yes," comes the answer.

"Do you still want a push?" calls out the husband.

"Yes, please!" comes the reply from the dark.

"Where are you, I can't see you?" asks the husband.

"I'm over here.....on the swing"

Light can be very helpful at times....

Here in our Scripture this morning John is teaching us about faith. This morning John continues and explains how faith and sin relate to one another. Now John makes some very strong statements about light, darkness, lies and sin in this passage – they kind of sound a bit philosophical, a bit mysterious – what John says may be a bit difficult to piece together at first, but John is actually very practical here – well, let's see what John has to say to us this morning.

John's first claim is that the information he is about to tell us, this information we read here this morning, this information is from God, and he is passing on the information to us. (When John says "him" he is referring to Jesus) Remember, we saw last week that John is now the longest surviving disciple, probably about 90 years old or so; He was Jesus' favorite person here on earth, perhaps you could even say that he was Jesus best friend – if there is anyone who knows about Jesus, especially in how Jesus relates to our faith, if there is anyone who knows about Jesus first hand – John is that man.

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So when John claims that this message comes from God – I take him quite seriously, and so should you. What John says here can have a serious impact upon our lives.

John tells us that God is Light. This is a well known way to describe God as was used quite frequently in Judaism and Christianity. The comparison of light and darkness was used by other religions of the day as well. We specifically see this in Iranian Zoroastrianism, but again, it is also very prevalent in Jewish thought and because it is seen in other religions of the day should in no way suggest that John is applying pagan thought here to Christianity – this is Judeo Christian thought through and through.

Two specific convictions became associated with God as light in Jewish and Christian thought: First revelation and salvation:

Psa. 27:1a The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?

Psa. 36:9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

The second conviction is holiness and illumination. The description of light provides an example of the flawless perfection of God. The light of God shows His absolute holiness in a sinful world. Here John plays into both meanings, but he leans much heavier on the aspect of illumination. Light providing illumination in dark places is an appropriate way to describe how God reveals himself to human kind. God several times throughout Scripture reveals himself as fire or as a bright light and is said to be clothed in light (psalm 104:2).

John tells us that God is light and then he emphasizes his point by showing the negative form of his emphasis – darkness. This is the strongest way to show a contrast of how pure God is. God is so pure, the only way to sort of describe Him is that He is light – and in contrast there is darkness – the absence of purity – the absence of the holy.

Take a light into deep darkness, like into a deep cave, and there in that dark cave the light appears so much brighter, so much more pure, rather than in a place with any ambient light, like if light is seen in the daylight outside the cave. So this light / dark comparison is showing us first the absolute purity and holiness of God, but also that the light of God illuminates the darkness in our lives.

Now here is where we get more practical. The point John is making isn't that God did not create darkness – but rather, his point is one of incompatibility – darkness is incompatible with light. The holiness of God, the purity of God is incompatible with darkness. God is so pure, He has no darkness.

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In practical terms, John is clearly, and without a doubt, insinuating that living in darkness is incompatible with the Christian life. For all practical purposes, John is telling us that the Christian life cannot be lived out in darkness.

What does he mean?

John explains what he means starting in verse 6.

To explain what he means John takes up claims of people who are in the church – but aren't living like it. They go to church, but they don't live like Christians. There are people who, one, claim to have fellowship with God but walk in darkness; Two, there are people who claim to be without sin and three, there are people who claim to be without sin.

Now look, there is a sense that all of us as Christians, all live in darkness – we are in a spiritually dark world after all. A Christian is within the darkness, that is a fact – but, a Christian has illumination around him to guide him so he doesn't wander aimlessly in the dark. To walk in the darkness means to not have the guidance of the light.

Specifically the guidance of light in our lives is set here in spiritual terms, but in practical terms it is knowing and following the Word of God, AND following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These twin guides the Bible and the Holy Spirit escort us through the dark.

Look at it this way: A Christian walks where the light guides him, rather than walking where he pleases. A Christian follows the light, Jesus is the light and he illuminates where we are to go, the Word of God directs us in everyday life as does the Holy Spirit – we do not choose our direction, God is the light within the darkness and we follow His light. The image John is attempting to create is that there is this light about us, like a spotlight, the spotlight moves and we follow it to stay in the light.

A person who isn't following the light simply walks where they please and at some point they walk out of the light. So these people John is referring to say they walk in the light, but it is clear they are not, because how they live their life is not according to what we see in Scripture. They can make claims all they want, but their behavior reveals who they really are. It is not possible to have fellowship with God, and yet to live in sin – sin means to walk in the darkness. John is drawing attention to certain features of life and calling them sinful – these sins, they are signs of living in darkness.

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To live in the light means to have a life compatible with fellowship with God. To live in the darkness means to have a life without the benefit of divine illumination. To say I walk in the light but don't follow God's Word or the direction of the Holy Spirit - That is oxymoronic, that is self deception.

How can I say I am living a godly life, when I cannot hear God; How can I say I am living a godly life when I cannot follow divine wisdom, that is, understand the Scriptures. Let's get hands on here. Here are a couple of questions to help you see if you are walking in the light – no need to answer out loud. Ready?

Do you know the Bible well enough to be able to apply it to your life in day to day decisions?

When was the last time you heard the direction of the Holy Spirit?

If we are not walking in the light of God – John says - we lie.

Let's jump to verse 8 and verse 10. If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves. If we claim to have not sinned we make out God to be a liar – and the Word of God has no place in our lives.

How can we claim to be without sin? Let's look at it a different way. People usually don't mean that they have no sin – what they mean is, the things they are doing are not sinful. What they do may be sin, but to them, their sin does not look like sin to them. They cannot see that their sin is sin, they cannot see that how they act is sinful.

See, people deny that they sin, or people deny that they have sin – because, whether they are conscious of it or not, they desire to justify themselves to continue to sin. If it is not a sin, I can continue to live this way. If it is not wrong, what's the problem.

Anything can be justified. But even if I am able to justify it, it is still a sin. Justification does not change it from what it is – SIN. Look, I may be able to justify my poor behavior-my emotional state was out of whack; I had a bad day; Traffic was so back up, I was just frustrated, so I acted out; Under the circumstances, you would do the same thing; There was this, there was that, it could be your fault, or your problem and not my problem....it doesn't matter why or how--- still, it is sin. The answer for our sin is not to come up with reasons why, but to confess and ask for forgiveness.

Ever notice that when you enter a dark room in order to find something, at first it is very difficult to see what you are looking for and you have a very difficult time in your search,

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but as time goes on, your eyes adjust to the darkness, and you can see fairly well in your search, but you cannot not as well as if the light was on. You in fact, intently looking for your object, will forget that you are in the dark...

You were in the light, but you left the light and entered the dark room out of your own free will...and now you have been there so long, it is hard to tell that you are not in the light anymore.

I used to see this thing as sin....but now, I don't see it that way anymore...

When I was a much younger man, I used to go on quite a few back packing trips. We had a favorite place just west of Lake Tahoe that we would go to quite often. On one trip, this happened and that happened and before we knew it we arrived at the trailhead after sunset.

The moon was full, we knew the trail quite well, so we decided to hike in at night. What a hike it was; it was a beautiful hike! The moon was so bright we could see quite well, and with the light reflecting off of the creeks and ponds in the meadows we traveled though we could more than see our way...that is until we hit the part of the trail that passed through some ponderosa pines. The trail simply disappeared. We thought we were doing alright until we all fell down a steep incline. When we landed at the bottom of the hill, camping equipment scattered here and there, we could hardly see our hands in front of our faces.

We found our flashlights and after about 30 minutes we were able to collect our odds and ends and locate the trail again. We thought we had enough light, but we had deceived ourselves. We thought we were walking in the light, we thought we could see well enough, but it led us to a painful realization – it is difficult to see without illumination.

Am I walking in the darkness and I don't know it?

Am I living a lie by giving excuses for my poor behavior?

Has it been so long that I have hear the direction of the Holy Spirit.....that I'm not sure what it is anymore?

Why did you lie?

Whatever the reason, I was wrong, I'm sorry, please forgive me, I honestly will try to be truthful from now on....now that wasn't so hard, was it?

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Who needs excuses? That's for the Pagan world around us. That's the only thing unbelievers have to lean on – self justification. If they can make their sin, make it feel like it is not sin, well, they can sleep at night.

But we don't have to live that way, we don't have to lie to ourselves to be at peace.

What does verse 9 tell us? If we confess our sins, Jesus who is faithful, will forgive us what do we do – we admit our sin face up, not denying it – we are healed. We are made whole again.

See John is assuming here that we will sin. Which, actually, should be obvious, since he tells us that anyone who claims to be without sin, is a liar. Notice that he states, "if we confess our sins" which assumes that we sin, and we will sin.

So what is sin? It is clean and simple - disobedience to God.

We think of sin in many different kinds of terms, but when we get down and dirty, ultimately it is disobedience to God. Now, how do we know what is disobedient to God – Well God has revealed that to us in His holy Word, the Bible. Plus we have seen in different sermons this past year that it is the Holy Spirit who is the one who will help us interpret the Bible – no matter how smart we are, no matter how educated we are, no matter how mature we are, the Holy Spirit will help us as Christians interpret Scripture.

So how do I remain in the light? See it right there in verse 9. Confess our sins –we will be purified – we will recognize our sin, then we are not self deceptive, we remain in the light...how simple is that?

Who here couldn't do that?

Don't worry about not being in the light, don't fret about it, don't analyze, don't guess – do something about it---and here is what you do, confess your sin, if you have a hard time with that ask God to show you your sin, believe me, you'll find out soon enough.

To confess our sin means that we come to an agreement with God, we agree that what we have done is in fact sin. God knew it was sin all along, I'm the one that has to come to terms with my sin, not God.

Let me add one more piece. I need to know the Word of God, otherwise I will be ignorant about my sin. Knowing the Bible well will help me know the sin in my life, it will take away the mystery.

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The deadliest sin is being unaware of our sin. The claim to be without sin is the ultimate in self deception...but that is something that can be fixed, and you know how to fix it.

Finally, verse 7 tells us the benefit of walking in the light - which is being responsive to God - we have a stronger fellowship with God. Actually, that's not it. Look at verse 7, what does it say? We will have fellowship with one another.

Truth is, those who claim to know God but cannot get along with others.....are self deceived. How can I claim to be in fellowship with God and not get along with other Christians, I find then that I am self deceived. When we have fellowship with God we naturally desire relationship with each other.

All of this is in the context of faith, my faith in Jesus Christ and the bottom line is this: Whoever I am, as a Christian I do sin, and I will sin. There are three things that will keep me in the light of Jesus Christ: Confession of my sins. This allows me to stop being self deceptive, it allows me to walk away from excuses and self justification; I also need to know my Bible well, so it is obvious to me what is sin; Finally, I need to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for He will give direction and help me deal with sin.