

Do You Have the Time?  
Time to See the Light  
John 3:14-21  
Fourth Sunday of Lent (B)  
March 11, 2018  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

John 3:14-21 (NRSV)

<sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."<sup>[b]</sup>

Over the last three Sundays I've been asking the question "Do you have the time?" as we prepare for Easter.

We've been using cell phones to turn off the alerts that cause temptation; to turn off the phone to make deliberate time to listen for God and last week we talked about action. Rather than tweeting, posting, emailing or just talkin' to DO something; turn over a few tables of complacency; MAYBE EVEN BE the answer in the things we're prayin' about.

DO YOU HAVE THE TIME?

I pray that you've been **taking** the time.

'Cause these disciplines in the midst of Lent can help us draw closer to God and to each other and I think BOTH have exciting outcomes!

Today, we're going to use our phones, grab 'em if you've got one, to illuminate the darkness.

Got your smartphones?

Okay, find your FLASHLIGHT app.

Now, Sally: go ahead and turn off the lights.  
Don't panic!  
Let's just sit in this darkness for a moment.

Now, smartphone users: TURN ON YOUR FLASHLIGHT APP

Wow! Makes a difference, huh?  
Even in this larger space!

OK, Sally, we've got to get on with the day. (*turn the lights back on*)  
And you can turn off your flashlights, too.

Illuminating the darkness; what we've just experienced is a great visual for our Scripture reading from John 3 today.

The background for this reading is that Jesus is talking to the Pharisee, Nicodemus. And the verses includes one of the most well-known verses in the whole Bible: John 3:16.

That verse summarizes WHY Jesus came, WHY Jesus had to die, and WHAT happens because of what Jesus did.

It summarizes, not only the Gospel of John, but the entirety of God's story for humanity

God is inviting us to step out of the darkness...maybe even bring someone else out of the darkness with us. It IS time to see the light!

God created light, remember, in the THIRD VERSE (not book or chapter, but 3<sup>rd</sup> verse) OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE!  
And God "saw that it was good."

The Light in today's verses is Jesus.  
This Light was present at Creation.  
And this Light is alive for us now.  
In fact, we have the promise of LIFE because of this Light.

God put light into the world and it's OUR job to share that light.  
THAT Light is the LOVE that God put into the world and it's our job to share that love.

Are we doing that?

My devotion and study time this week had me work through the very important aspect of this passage which is that God sent Light and Love with the motivation, NOT OF judgment, but of love.

The summarizing "God so loved the world that he sent his son" verse does *not* mean "God loved SOOOOOOOOOO much that..." It **really** means "God loved in this way..." that is God's love is giving and purposeful; meant to rescue and give life...the abundant life of relationship with God (through Jesus) right NOW.

God's objective is **salvation, not condemnation.**

Are we causing condemnation (our own or someone else's) because we sit in the dark and haven't fully come into the light of Jesus!?

In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus purposely uses the metaphor of light and darkness to make his point. Up until now, in John's gospel, there has been a contrast between those who believe ONLY in the miracles of Jesus AND those who are moving beyond *just the signs* to a real relationship with Jesus. Old Nicodemus **has been** fascinated with the miracles but now, Jesus challenges him to come further.

Dear Ones, to know Jesus and follow his drastic commitment to God's purpose and methods, we're going to have to do the hard work of dealing with some stuff that we'd rather ignore or keep hidden; buried in the dark.

When we refuse to acknowledge brokenness, sin and weaknesses, WHICH ARE things that keep **us** in the DARK, we can't be restored, forgiven and healed.

Amen?

Nicodemus actually came to Jesus in the cover of darkness so that others wouldn't know what he was doing (or asking.)

After his conversation with Jesus old "Nic" had to make his faith in Jesus known even though there was a cost to his faith. He was honest with himself and with God and began to live in the light.

Verse 19 of today's reading says, "light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light because their deeds were evil. They fear the light because it will expose their evil deeds."

But, praise God, it continues: "whoever lives in the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly what they have done has been in the sight of God."

Are we ready to see the light?

I listened to the testimonial of the actor who is portraying the gospel writer Luke in the movie "Paul, Apostle to Christ." Have you seen the advertisements?

The Mr. Caviezel started out quietly.

He said, "Saul means "'great one.' Paul means 'little one.'"

He continued, "God was able to use Paul as one of God's greatest evangelists when Saul "saw the light" and made the change to turn from the darkness of evil persecution and instead, share the Light of Christ.

What changes can we make?

Nicodemus, after standing WITH the Light risked his reputation.

And his life was transformed in the Light.

Are we sharing the light like Paul or Nicodemus?

The Kingdom of God that Jesus preached and demonstrated is about God's grace and compassion.

Those who want to be a part of that, need to believe in more than the miracles of Jesus but the message and meaning of Jesus.

Be clear in your battle that our *entire lives* need to be directed by the values and purposes of God!

What will it take for us to risk shaking off the darkness of indifference of our lives? Faith! Faith in Christ and in his wisdom. That will save us.

Otherwise, we'll flounder around without even a match to light; much less a phone app flashlight!

It's going to require us to be warriors who take risks; who step out of the darkness and stand for the truth AND REPEAT OVER AND OVER AND OVER of WHY Jesus came and WHAT happens because of that.

We have to set ourselves apart from the darkness of denial within ourselves; from the darkness of corruption in the world.

'Cause we weren't made to blend in.

We were created to stand out!

And speak out.

To have that faith that releases us from the darkness of sin and into the Light of freedom *from* sin.

That freedom exists NOT to do what you like, but gives us the RIGHT to ***do what we ought.***

It's the freedom from sin and weakness and the slavery that sin puts us in.

That's freedom that "*God gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.*"

**It was freedom worth dying for.**

Jesus did.

Let's help each other do this!

Let's enable others to come along with us in our faithful belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Savior.

We are in God's fight for freedom.

And with the Holy Spirit as our shield and Christ as the sword we CAN live in the light and send Satan and his minions (in all forms of darkness) out of our lives, out of the lives of those we love, out of the lives we haven't met yet but will testify to... BE A FLASHLIGHT IN THE DARKNESS and say: "I have come into the Light and been set free. Come with me!"

DO YOU HAVE THE TIME TO see the Light?

It's time!

Thanks be to God. Amen!