

John 3 Sermon 31 Jan 2021

P: for us to understand why ppl don't turn to the Light. **M:** because of evil deeds & fear of exposure

- We are going to look at just 3 verses: today v19-21. They are short let me read them again.
 - v19-21
- I wonder if you heard the 22-year-old young black woman, Amanda Gorman recite her poem at the inauguration of Joe Biden. You don't have to take sides in US politics to appreciate the thoughtful and hopeful words she shared, starting and ending with the theme of light.
 - *"For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it".*
- Light has been a pretty universal symbol for what is hopeful and positive throughout the history of the human race, in religion, in ethics in politics. After all light gives warmth, clarity, and life as it chases away the darkness.
- But here's the big issue.... If light is generally accepted by everyone as a good thing, why don't we want it? In Amanda Gorman's words, why are we not brave enough to see it sometimes?
- It's a crucial question as we think of Jesus in John's gospel, the Light of the World come to bring revelation and rescue.
- Over the last few weeks we've looked at 3 passages:
 1. ch1 Jesus is the light that shines life, and the light that defeats darkness.
 2. ch 8 He's telling the truth when he claims to be the light of the world, because of his origin and destiny.
 3. ch9 And he gives a blind man sight. A miraculous sign proving his identity
 - (feel free to watch what you missed on our youtube channel/listen online).
- So if Jesus is so clearly the Light of the World, why do people shy away from him?
 - Why do so few people become Christians?
 - Why do even committed Christians find a daily resistance against Jesus in their hearts?
- For the answer to this we have to go back to ch3. That's what these verses are all about.

Why do we not want the light? The answer centres around the two E's in verses 19-20, before we find some good news in v21.

1) The practice of Evil v19

- v19
- It's not altogether clear whether this paragraph contains Jesus' words to Nicodemus (flowing on from before), or whether now these are John's words to his readers following that. They didn't have speech marks in those days.
- But either way they use law court language to talk about who is condemned as guilty and who is not. It's a crucial passage about who gets to heaven.
- And it's a paragraph that contains the most famous verse in the Bible. 3v16. v16-18
- Who is on trial? Not Jesus Christ, as Pilate and the Jews would later think, but rather us. The world is on trial for how we treat Jesus.

- And v19 our first verse for today John introduces “light” language. **v19**
- *“Light has come into the world”*- we’ve seen that for 3 weeks now. Jesus himself, the Messiah sent from God embodies brings revelation, rescue.
- But here’s the problem. *“people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil”*.
- It’s very simple, John records. People don’t like the light, because they prefer something else.
 - People don’t come to the light because they want to carry on doing evil things.
- This short sentence explains everything.
 - It’s crazy- why wouldn’t you run to Jesus the most wonderful man there is?
 - Answer: Moral evil.
- If I can put it like this, people don’t have a problem with Jesus first of all. They have a problem with their own actions, and that brings a clash. The practice of evil.
- ▲ I remember doing student work in a university and bumping into a young lad in a bar in a converted church. I’d known this young lad as a teenager on a summer camp where he’d seemed to be interested in Jesus. But when I caught up with him, wondering if he would come back to a real church, he told me in a slightly inebriated way that “he used to be into all that, but now he wanted to to sleep around, and so Christianity wasn’t very convenient right now.
 - People don’t reject Christianity because Jesus is boring. He’s fascinating, his preaching is unlike anything ever heard on the planet.
 - They don’t reject him because he never really achieved much. The things he did which John records are incredible miracles, peppered with eyewitness details that contain the ring of truth.
- People reject Jesus “because their deeds were evil”.
- And when you read “evil”, don’t simply think of a grossly immoral murderer or sex offender. Think of any action that is in opposition to loving God. It’s just the selfishness of wanting to go my own way rather than God’s. And we like going our way, and so we don’t want Jesus’ way.
- It’s tragic. We have a foolish and destructive addiction to sin that will not let it go.
- People don’t avoid the light because their deeds are evil.
- However much people claim that their problem with Christianity is intellectual or philosophical, it’s actually moral. They don’t want to get off the throne and let Jesus take over.
- That’s the first E. **The practice of Evil.**
- It’s important for our outreach. It’s going to be hard work. As long as we think that people are basically nice, we will never understand what a battle we are in in evangelism.
- It’s important for understanding what’s going on in our own hearts. We push back from the light. We don’t want to come too close. Because 1) of the practice of evil. And second?

The second E? **2) The fear of Exposure v20**

- There's a story which [Wikipedia](#) says may go back to man who invented Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle. Apparently, he once wrote a message to twelve of his friends saying "All is discovered, flee at once", and all twelve of them left the country! I don't know if that's true, but it illustrates our fear of being found out.
- This is the second reason we have a vested interest to stay away from Jesus, not only because we love evil, but because we also fear being having our evil shown up.
- **v20**
- This is really ironic. We hate being guilty. And so when we are in the wrong we hide.
- While all the while, Jesus is waiting not to condemn us but to save us (v17).
- If we don't like exposure, if we don't want to be found guilty, then we're going about it the wrong way.
- When do we want our telling off? Now in this life as we come to the light- a light that forgives as well as exposing. Or in the next life in hell?
- As a family we've been reading the stories of [Patricia StJohn](#), (spelled St. John). She was a missionary and writer of children's stories. They are absolute classics, and some of them have been turned into films, including "[Treasures of the Snow](#)" that you can find on Amazon Prime.
 - It tells the story of a young girl, Annette, in the swiss alps whose younger brother, Dani, has his pet cat dangled over a precipice by a nasty neighbour Lucien. Unfortunately, Lucien drops the cat and Dani launches himself over the cliff to try and save it, leaving him hurtling down the cliff face.
 - Rather than running to get help, Lucien (who's name means light) runs away and hides in the dark of a barn.
 - It's John 3. We are evil and do evil deeds, and then we hide in the barn for fear of being found out.
 - But Lucien is going to be found out eventually. He'd be better off being found out sooner rather than later.
 - And Dani is OK, but you have to read "Treasures of the Snow" to find out more.
- We tend to put on a good front in church don't we. We put on our "Sunday best". We don't really want people to know about what goes on in our hearts and in our homes the rest of the week. But we don't need to pretend. Church is not a hotel for saints, it's a hospital for the sick.
- I don't mean we should all hang out our dirty washing before one another, or glorify our sin, but there is a place for confession, honesty and accountability. It's part of coming to or back to the light.

The practice of Evil, the fear of exposure.

Finally, the Work of God. We move from the negative verses to the positive verse.

3) the Work of God

v21

- Verse 19 & 20 talks about **the doer of evil**.
 - “people loved darkness because their deeds were evil”.
- v21 talks about **the doer of the truth**.
 - v21 “But whoever lives by the truth”,
ESV “whoever does what is true, comes to the light”.
- And instead of staying in darkness to avoid guilt they come into the light.
- It’s a wonderful thing. You don’t have to be stuck in sin and condemnation and darkness. There’s a way back! You just need to come into the light. I’ve called this sermon “out of the darkness”.
- *“There is always light if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it”.*
- In the story I mentioned, the Treasures of the Snow, Annette, the big sister of the boy who’s had the accident is herself facing her own battles with darkness and honesty.
 - She can’t forgive Lucien and doesn’t want to. In fact she stays in the dark. She knows that Jesus is knocking on the door of her heart but she knows that letting him in will involve forgiving Lucien, but holding onto that sense of superiority is too precious to her, so she leaves Jesus outside her heart knocking.
- But wonderfully her wise Granny has a word with her, and says, “you can’t drive darkness out by yourself, you need the light to come in first” ... (everyone needs to read it or watch it). Here’s the quote....
 - *“But I couldn’t stop hating Lucien, said Annette softly, fingering her long braids thoughtfully.*
 - *“No,” said Grandmother. “You’re quite right. None of us can stop ourselves thinking wrong thoughts, and it isn’t much good trying. But Annette—when you come down in the morning and find this room dark with the shutters closed, do you say to yourself, ‘I must chase away the darkness and the shadows first, and then I will open the shutters and let in the sun’? Do you waste time trying to get rid of the dark?”*
 - *“Of course not!” said Annette.*
 - *“Then how do you get rid of the dark?”*
 - *“Well, I pull back the shutters, of course, and then the light comes in!”*
 - *“But what happens to the dark?”*
 - *“I don’t know; it just goes when the light comes!”*
 - *“That is just what happens when you ask the Lord Jesus to come in,” said Grandmother. “He is Love, and when love comes in, hatred and selfishness and unkindness will give way to it, just as the darkness gives way when you let in the sunshine. But to try to chase it out alone would be like trying to chase the shadows out of a dark room. It would be a waste of time.”*

- Here's the wonder of v21. God loves to shine away the darkness.
 - Let me read that in the ESV version which is slightly more accurate...
 - *"But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been **carried out in God.**"*
- We have to come to the Light, but we can't come to the Light, because we hate the light. But wonderfully God can enable us to do the impossible.
- *"But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."*
- Works carried out in God. It is ultimately God who enables us to come to the Light. We don't clear out the darkness and then open the shutters, we ask the light to come in and he chases the darkness away. The Work of God.
- If you are battling with darkness right now, stop trying to do it yourself, ask God to come and do the work.... I want to talk to 4 ppl briefly as we close.
- ☞1 If you are not a Christian, you will never become one, unless you ask for God's help.
 - You can't see Jesus because you don't want to, unless God changes you. So ask him "Jesus if you are real, help me see you".
 - As we saw with the Pharisees last week, they were blind. They couldn't see Jesus. They were so convinced with their own philosophy of life and God, that he didn't fit in. But Jesus loves to open blind eyes.
 - Come to him and ask him to help you see. And ask him to work in your life so that it may be clearly seen that your "works have been **carried out in God**".
- ☞2 If you are battling/stuck in sin at the moment, don't fear bringing it to light. To take an extreme example: If you are cheating on your spouse, tell God and tell them. That will be an incredibly painful journey but it's the first step to help and repentance and restoration. Come clean. Come to the light. Only God can help you do this. Get a Christian friend to pray for you.
- ☞3 To the person trying to reach a friend with the good news. Talk to them about Jesus. That's what it's all about. But you must pray for them. Because it's God's work to open their eyes. They can't see unless there's a work of God, they don't want to, they want to carry on doing what they want. Plead with God for eyesight.
- ☞4 And if you are a follower of Jesus, and therefore have the Light of the World in you, start **being** the light of the world, with his help. "what they have done has been carried out in God"
 - In your speech at work, in your phone calls to your mum, in your practical help to your next-door neighbour. It's God's work, but done with our deeds. Christians have a tradition in times of plagues and pandemics of staying to help, not fleeing to safety.
 - In John 8:12, Jesus said "I am the Light of the World".
 - In Matthew 5:14, Jesus said "You are the Light of the World"
 - (it's why we chose the word Lucie for one of our daughters)
 - As Amanda Gorman put it. *"For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to **be it**".*
 - And that will make a difference whether you are from the UK, the USA, or the Ukraine!
 - And for more on us being the light of the world, come back next week.
- Let's pray.