

I would like to begin by paraphrasing verse 20 of the third chapter, from John's Gospel, which shared with us. I wish to use this verse as a point of entry into what Scripture is saying to me this morning. "Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their evil deeds will be exposed."

You see, darkness and light are opposites. Darkness is the absence of light. We have a choice between walking through life with the lights on or stumbling through the darkness of this world without any source of light to guide us. Scripture tells us that Jesus came into the world not to judge humanity for all the evil that inhabits our existence, but rather to bring God's children back into a right relationship with our Creator.

It should come as no surprise to you that our world is not very much different than the world that Jesus was born into some two thousand years ago. The darkness of sin and evil were embedded in the hearts of people in Jesus' time. Many believed that they could live without God and because of this, the darkness became rampant in their lives. Does that sound familiar to you/ Isn't this the way our world is dysfunctional today? Scripture shares that the people loved the darkness and lived in the shadow of their sin and evil acts against God's great gift of creation. The people had chosen to step out of their relationship with their Creator and to unwittingly accept that their reward in life were the things they could see, the

things they could touch, and everything they could hold in their hands. There was no thought given to life beyond the grave. The darkness of sin covered all the people and permeated through everything they did. And they did not want God to see into the darkness of their souls, so they turned away from God and did things in secret. But at that time, God was a God of love, and not about to give up on his people. And God is the same today, loving and forgiving of our sins.

It is into this dark world that God chooses to send his own Son, not to judge humanity for the evil and sin in the world, but to offer the gift of eternal life. Jesus is God's instrument of deliverance for all humanity from the darkness of sin and evil in the world. That is how it was two thousand years ago, and so it remains today. To accept God's gift of eternal life, we must first accept that we have separated ourselves from God in what we do and how we act. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their evil deeds will be exposed. That is what scripture is saying to us. Isn't that right? It seems to me that we will not find God's light until we acknowledge our own wrong doings before our Creator. But how do we go about doing this?

God sent Jesus into the world to be the light, light which exposes the truth about the evil that resides in and around us. And the truth is not always a beautiful thing to see. In fact, much truth in this world is only exposed when we open our

eyes to the wickedness, hatred, and mistakes caused by our selfishness and fears.

It seems to me that Jesus is our only hope for finding our right relationship with God. I believe that individually we must discern what our relationship with God will look like. Will I accept that God loves me and wishes to abide with me in this life? Will I be, a reflection of God's love to all those around me? Do I believe that Jesus died for my transgressions so I might have a relationship with my God right now in this life, and not just in some future kingdom? Do I believe all of this because I have God's promise of life more abundant now, and in the kingdom of heaven? Scripture tells us that God has come to abide with us and that gives us strength.

The story of Jesus coming into the world to bring light out of darkness would not be complete without his crucifixion, his death, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. The Cross is where Jesus takes our sinful condition upon himself even though he is without sin himself because he is God. The crucifixion sets in motion the events which complete the circle which begins with his incarnation and come full circle by accomplishment of God's desire to bring all humanity back into relationship with the Divine after he has risen from the dead. With his ascension into heaven, the Son of God returns to being One with the Father and the Holy

Spirit. Yet, God continues to abide with us in this life through the in-dwelling of God's Spirit with all believers.

From this passage from John's Gospel we hear this, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus came to bring salvation because God would not give up on his people. And God still has not given up on this people.

We are saved because of Jesus' suffering on the cross, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension back to the Creator in heaven. I want you to take note of something from this 16th verse of the third chapter of John's gospel. It says, "That everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life". This is not written in the past tense like much of the scriptures. It is, in fact, written in the present tense. For me, this means that believers possess "life eternal" right now in this temporal life that we share on this earth. God has already gifted us with relationship to the Divine through the light eternal when we chose to look to the cross to see the redemptive power of Jesus taking all our sin onto Himself and casting away our darkness forever.

Live in the light and let not the shadow of darkness overcome your soul. The light of God's grace will brighten our lives in the weeks ahead as we continue on this path of discernment. And for this, we are thankful. Amen

