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The True Light

John 1:1-18

Introduction

How far can you see? Across a room? Across a street? Across a river? As far as the hills in the distance? As far as the moon, the sun and the stars? We can see amazing distances. As long as there is light to show us. In the dark we can't see any distance at all. We can't even see our hands in front of our faces. We wait for the sunrise, and we can see the beauty of the world, we can see the problems in the world, and we can also see ourselves.

Jesus the True Light

John wants to tell us about Jesus, and says he is like the light. Before he came there was darkness. Not physical darkness but spiritual darkness. People couldn't see the beauty around them, they couldn't see the problems in the world, and they couldn't really see themselves.

Then Jesus came. John says:

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. [John 1 v 9]

What did people see when Jesus came into their town? They saw God. Jesus told his disciples that no one has seen the Father, but anyone who has seen him has seen what the Father is like. Because he is God. Hebrews 1 says:

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. [Hebrews 1 v 3]

When people looked at Jesus, God shone out. But they saw something else as well. By his light, they saw themselves. That's one of the problems with bringing things into the light: you see the marks, the scratches, the dirt that's on them. When people came into the presence of Jesus they looked at themselves and they saw their marks, their scratches, their dirt. They knew they were sinners. The same thing happened to Isaiah in the Old Testament. He was shown a vision of God, mighty and holy, and when he looked at himself he cried out:

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" [Isaiah 6 v 5]

The problem for many of us is that we don't compare ourselves with God's holiness, we compare ourselves with those around us. "I'm just as good as her!" "I don't do the bad things he does". When Jesus came, many people saw their own sin and their need to be saved.

But the Light of the World didn't just show us the problem, he also showed us the solution. It's true that he is holy. It's true that we are sinners. It's true that there's nothing we can do to cleanse ourselves. But there is hope for those who receive him.

Firstly, John makes it clear that not everyone received Jesus as the Light. In verse 11 of our passage it says:

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. [John 1 v 11]

It's hard to believe, isn't it? Jesus came to the world. He showed who he was with many miracles. He healed people, he calmed the storm, he even raised people from the dead. And yet there were many who still didn't accept him. They didn't believe he was really who he said he was. Or they didn't believe that they needed a saviour in the first place. But for those who did believe, it changed their lives forever:

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [John 1 v 12]

What happens to those who receive the True Light in their lives?

- They are forgiven,
- They are made righteous,
- They are made part of the kingdom of God,
- They are adopted into the family of God,
- They are made citizens of heaven.

But then Jesus left. He went up to heaven and wasn't on the earth any more. How can we see the Light now?

Reflecting the True Light

Well, we talked earlier about the dark, and how you can't see anything on a dark night. But not all nights are totally dark. Sometimes the moon gives us light enough to see by. It's enough light to see the way, the path ahead of us.

But it's important to remember that the moon doesn't make its own light. The light we get from the moon is just the reflection of the light from the Sun. Did you know that you can tell where the Sun is by looking at the moon? If it's a crescent, lit up on the right, then the sun is off to the right. A crescent on the left points to the sun over to the left. When the moon is full, then it's facing the sun and the sun is behind us. Even when the sun is hidden we can tell where it is because the moon points the way.

Jesus said:

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." [John 8 v 12]

But he also said:

"You are the light of the world." [Matthew 5 v 14]

How can that be? How can we be the light of the world if he is the Light of the World? Well it's a bit like the sun and the moon. When Jesus left the world we no longer saw his light directly, but we saw it reflected in his followers. Each person who believed in him reflected a

bit of his glory. And just like the moon, they pointed the way to the True Light, to Jesus. As Jesus' followers travelled around, they shone his light into other people's lives, and many of them became followers too. And so the light spread around the world. Jesus said:

let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. [Matthew 5 v 16]

One of the very first of these followers was a man called John. Not the one who wrote the book we read from but the one known as John the Baptist. We read about him in our passage:

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. [John 1 v 6-8]

After him, and after Jesus had gone to heaven, there were many more. Jesus' disciples were witnesses for him. A man called Paul went travelling all over the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus. Missionaries throughout history have gone to places where there is darkness and have brought the Light of the World into lives wherever they went. And now, we who know Jesus are called to be lights, reflections of his glory, pointing the way to Jesus.

Do You Have the True Light in Your Life?

So the question is: do you have the True Light in your life? Have you seen the holiness of God, seen your own sinfulness, understood that Jesus paid for those sins on the cross and received him as your saviour? If you haven't I'd like you to think about it, pray about it. As you see the lights decorating trees and houses this Christmas time, think about the True Light that came into the world.

If you have received him, are you letting him shine in your life? Do your works and your words point the way to Jesus? Maybe this Christmas you can be a way that God uses to show someone the way to Jesus.

When John the Baptist was born, his father spoke a prophecy. He said that the child would grow to be a prophet who would show the way to the coming messiah. He said:

the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. [Luke 1 v 78-79]

My prayer this Christmas is that God will guide your feet into the way of peace, and the True Light will shine into your life.