

The Fourth Sunday in Lent
19-03-2023
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

1 Samuel 16: 1-13	Samuel anoints David as future king
Psalms 23	The Lord is my Shepherd
Ephesians 5: 8-14	Be Children of Light, not Darkness
John 9: 1-41	Jesus heals the Blind man

Introduction

The main image we have from the bible readings today is “Light”. Last week we had the image and symbolism of water, and today we have “Light”. In the sentence of scripture set down for today, we hear Jesus declare of himself,

“I am the Light of the World”.

So today, let us look at the imagery we have, when we think about light.

Let us look at John's Gospel and how those in today's scripture reading responded to Jesus as the Light, and how Jesus gives us a physical example, so as to describe a spiritual truth.

And let us look at how we are called to be “Children of the Light”.

Light

Firstly, what do you think of when you hear the word “Light”? Light is generally considered a positive thing. If we have light, we can see. Light is the opposite of darkness. If we are in darkness, then we can't see.

As human beings we are “diurnal” animals, that is we are active during the daytime. Unlike many Australian mammals which are nocturnal, that is they are active at night.

So, in spiritual terms, “Light” is generally associated with goodness, and “Darkness” is generally associated with the bad.

This is emphasized in the reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians today:-

⁸ For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

Responding to Jesus as the Light

Let us now look at today's reading from John's Gospel, and how those involved responded to Jesus as the "Light of the World", when Jesus brought "Light" into the life of the man born blind.

Firstly, let's look at the neighbours. They were a bit skeptical. Some thought that it was the man who was healed, others weren't so sure. Being skeptical about Jesus might be a good place to start, if it is the first time you have heard about Jesus, but it is not good to remain there. The challenge for those who may be skeptical is to investigate further, find out more about Jesus. Get to know who Jesus really is, because I believe if you find out who Jesus really is, then you will have found the light.

Secondly, let's look at the Pharisees. They had listened to Jesus and had seen who Jesus was, and they chose to reject Jesus. Jesus interrupted the power and prestige they had in their lives. They wanted to keep the rules for the sake of keeping the rules, but they failed to see the love God has for us in making the rules in the first place. The challenge for those of us who might like things to be black and white is that we get so fixated on rules that we miss allowing the light into our lives.

Thirdly, let's look at the parents of the man born blind. They believed. They knew what Jesus had done for their son, but they were scared to allow Jesus to be the light in their lives. They faced the possibility of being kicked out of the synagogue, of being ostracized from all they knew, and their very way of life. Being a Christian, and living as Children of the light, will not necessarily always be an easy choice. We heard in the psalm today about walking through the "valley of the shadow of death" which in itself is a reference to darkness and challenges. However, the psalm also goes on to say, "I will fear no evil; for you are with me, your rod and your staff comfort me." And then at the end of the psalm we have the assurance that if we allow God to be our shepherd, God will always be with us. If we allow Jesus to be our Light, then we will be given the ability to live as children of the light.

Now let us look at the man born blind. He obeyed and believed when he encountered Jesus. He went and washed in the pool when Jesus told him to. He was prepared to acknowledge what Jesus had done for him in his life. He even stood up to the Pharisees. Jesus had physically brought Light into his life, and he wasn't afraid to let others know about it. When Jesus caught up with him after his questioning by the Pharisees, he declared to Jesus "Lord, I believe", and he worshipped Jesus.

Just as Jesus gave light, to live into the fullness of life, when he was physically here on earth 2000 years ago, Jesus offers that light to us today. Jesus used this imagery of himself being the light of the world to let the Pharisees know that their rejection of his light was the equivalent of spiritual blindness. The light that Jesus offers though is not just physical light, as with the man born blind. It is a better light than any physical light that we could even begin to imagine. The light that Jesus offers brings us into the very presence of God.

Children of the Light

If we respond to Jesus as the Light in our lives then we are called to be “Children of the Light”. You might be thinking, I’m not a child anymore, I haven’t been for a long time, what does that mean?

To be a “Child of the Light’ is to be someone who represents Jesus to the world around them. It is not an academic thing, or just an intellectual thing, but rather a way of being. Being a “Child of the Light”, is not just about believing a certain thing about God, or keeping some particular rules. It involves all of who we are as a person. It involves responding to Jesus with our whole lives.

The light of Jesus needs to be the motivating factor of all that we believe, all that we think, all of our intentions, and all that we actually do in life.

When a light is shone on our lives, will others see Jesus?

Are our lives attractive to those around us? Do others see goodness in us? I’m reminded of a sign that was at the exit of a Church, which went like this:-

“Be careful how you live your life, you may be the only Bible some people read this week”.

It’s a big task, because we are so conditioned to want to do, what we want to do. To make someone else the motivating factor of all that we do is hard, but it is also liberating. So, to be a “Child of the Light”, is actually to make a huge call on our lives. But it is a call, that if acknowledged and answered, will bring us into God’s marvelous light, and allow us to reflect that light to others.

Just as God gave the Holy Spirit to David when he was anointed, God gives the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen all who accept Jesus as the light in their lives. If we truly allow Jesus to be the Light in our lives, then we will be enabled to make choices, and to live lives, that show the light of Jesus to others.

Conclusion

Christianity is all about saying, “I want Jesus to be the Light in my Life”. But, do we always live as if Jesus is our Light? Of course, the truthful answer to this question is “no”. It’s in our human nature to want to do things our own way. That’s what the definition of sin is, to want to do things our own way, and not God’s way. But when we allow Jesus to be our Light, we can know God’s forgiveness and God’s peace in our lives. God’s light comes in, and it frees us to live into Jesus, as the light.

When I look around at all the challenges we have in our world today, I think how amazing it is, that we can have Jesus as our light. May we continually be enabled to acknowledge Jesus as our light, so that we can have this light in our lives, and so that the Light of Jesus will shine through in our lives, in all we do before others. Amen.