

## Two Pairs of Themes from John's Gospel

### I. Intro:

- A. This morning I want us to consider two pairs of themes from the Gospel of John.
- B. I say pairs of themes because each theme has two sides - like a coin.
- C. The pairs I want us to ruminate on are
  - 1. Darkness/Light
  - 2. Call/Response

### II. Darkness/Light

#### A. Darkness

- 1. "Do you feel the world is broken? (We do)"
- 2. This world IS broken. Hardly anyone would disagree with this assessment.
- 3. Even the world can agree with this point on some level.
  - a) Disease
  - b) War
  - c) Natural disasters
  - d) Crime
  - e) Emptiness/Depression
  - f) Moral bankruptcy
  - g) Broken relationships
- 4. But as real and true as these things are, this is a merely a secular or human assessment of symptoms and doesn't get to the root problem.
- 5. What does John say about the darkness of our world?
  - a) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not **overcome** it* (John 1:1-5 ESV)
    - (1) This word that the ESV translates "overcome" is an interesting word. It only occurs a few times in the Bible. It's not an easy word to translate which is why you will see some translations rendering it "overcome" while others translate it "comprehend".
    - (2) I'm not a Greek scholar, but in my opinion "comprehend" works better because of the context of what John writes later. It's the idea of grasping, receiving, accepting something.
  - b) *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not **know** him. He came to his own, and his own people did not **receive** him.* (John 1:9-11 ESV)
  - c) *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.* (John 3:19-20 ESV)
- 6. A quick synopsis of Darkness

- a) God made the world good
- b) Mankind, in Adam, rejected God and chose evil and as a result the whole earth was plunged into darkness.
- c) The world that God made good is now broken and all its human inhabitants hate their creator and instead worship themselves. They hate the light and love the darkness. They hate the bread of life and instead crave only poisoned pastries (for those who have ears to hear - Turkish Delight).
- d) Every single person living and who has ever lived is walking in darkness, is under God's curse and is destined for everlasting torment.
- e) Let that sink in...
- f) That is the reality that we live in day in and day out that we often don't think about and rarely speak about except in very general terms and broad strokes.
- g) Every person that has ever lived. Every person you know. Your neighbor. Your co-worker. Your family member. Is a God-hating person heading for an eternity of torment in hell.
- h) Wait a minute...that's a bit harsh, right? That's a bit extreme! What a dark and pessimistic view of the world and of people! This world isn't THAT bad!
- i) After all I know a lot of really nice people who aren't Christians. In fact, many of them put many of us to shame: they work hard, take care of their families, help the needy, show kindness and friendliness to those around them shops at The Mac Guys...and in general try to be good people. The fact that they're not Christians doesn't make them bad does it? No. The fact that they're descendants of Adam does. And were all in that camp.
- j) We don't have a lot of time to unpack what Jesus meant when he said that we humans love the darkness and hate the light. Suffice it to say that Jesus knew a lot of "nice" people too. And those people's positive lifestyle was also driven not by a love for their good and great God, but by Godless self-interest and self worship.
- k) Think of a man who in many respects is a model husband. He does all of the things that a loving spouse is SUPPOSED to do. [Provides financially, invests relationally, helps around the house, takes his family to church, etc.) Except he has no love for his wife and has devoted his affections to another woman that he sees on the side. Now how do all of his other "nice" actions appear?
- l) This is our posture towards the great and good God who made us to enjoy him. Except with God the offense is infinitely greater because he is infinitely worthy and deserving of our perfect love and adoration.
- m) So all of humanity is guilty and condemned under God's wrath. And this is a DESERVED punishment. This is what we all have earned. The just and righteous thing for God to do is to condemn all of humanity to hell for all eternity.
  - (1) Now, let's stop for a minute. If you don't get this point - if you don't wholeheartedly embrace this truth - the Bible as it is written will not make sense to you and will be an offense.
  - (2) If you can't embrace this truth, you can't say you believe the Bible or say that you are a Christian. In fact, part of what happens to a person who becomes a Christian is that they become convinced...convicted that this is true about them.
- n) This is the dark reality of our world. It's not pretty. It's not fun. But it's true. And we need to understand and accept it if we are going to understand and accept the rest of God's truth in his Word.

## B. Light

1. So here we are: Jesus is painting the glaringly harsh reality of the darkness of mankind: we are lost, fallen, broken, dead, condemned, damned.
2. The human story could justly end there similarly to the way it did with the fallen angels. Nothing in God's justice or righteousness demanded that God do anything other than condemn us to our just punishment.
3. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.* (Isaiah 9:2, 6–7 ESV)
4. What does this mean?! It means that while God could have justly left all of mankind to perish in hell, he had another desire; another purpose. To show his mercy and grace!
5. God chose to shine light into the darkness!
6. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* (John 1:14–16 ESV)
7. *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* (John 1:1–5 ESV)

## III. The Call/The Response

### A. The Call

1. Jesus didn't stop at merely shining the light of his light in the world.
2. He went to the lost ones and called them to leave the darkness and come into his light. That was the entirety of Jesus' mission on earth: showing and calling people into his light. That's what his preaching was about. That's what his miracles were about. And ultimately, that's what his cross was about.
3. *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* (John 6:35 ESV)
4. *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37–38 ESV)*
5. *And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.* (John 12:44–46 ESV)
6. This call went out from Jesus far and wide. To rich and poor. To average people and to leaders. To religious people and to non-religious.

### B. The Response

1. It was not enough for Jesus to shine his light in the darkness. The darkness could not receive the light. The people of darkness hated the light.
2. Neither was it enough for Jesus to voice the call for people to leave behind the darkness and come into the light.

3. Many people “saw” the light of Jesus and “heard” his call but seeing, they did not see and hearing, they did not hear.
  - a) *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.* (John 7:1 ESV)
  - b) *The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.* (John 7:32 ESV)
  - c) *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.* (John 6:66 ESV)
  - d) *There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?”* (John 10:19–20 ESV)
  - e) *Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” For not even his brothers believed in him.* (John 7:2–5 ESV)
4. Why is this? The Light was right there for them to see! Life himself was right in front of them calling them to come and receive his life!
5. Jesus explained it this way:
  - a) *But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”* (John 6:36–40 ESV)
  - b) *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day....Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—* (John 6:44–45 ESV)
  - c) I love how Paul describes it in 2 Corinthians 4:3–6: *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God....For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (ESV)
6. Some looked in Jesus’ face and saw a trouble-maker, or a crazy person, or a disappointment. They saw Jesus’ light and heard his call and merely saw someone they thought they could use who ended up disappointing them by offering them himself (the light which they hated) instead of giving them what they wanted (the darkness which they loved).
7. But others looked in Jesus’ face and God shone in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God
  - a) Nicodemus
    - (1) *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night...”* (John 3:1–2 ESV)

- (2) *Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." (John 7:50–52 ESV)*
- (3) *After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. (John 19:38–39 ESV)*
- b) Man blind from birth
- (1) *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:35–38 ESV)*
- c) His Disciples
- (1) *After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:66–69 ESV)*
- (2) *Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (ESV)*

#### IV. Application

##### A. Darkness

1. Let's not give in to our culture by blurring and softening and niceifying God's truth.
2. We are not people who choose what we want "our truth" to be. We are people who embrace reality as it is - as God has shown it to be in his Word.
3. And that reality has many things in it that are not nice, not happy, not chipper and optimistic. If we insist on that version of reality then we have to give up on The Bible.
4. Truth contains sin and death and hell. But it also gives us Jesus' cross where we see the worst and best thing that ever happened in the world. If we reject the one we lose the other - to our great and terrible loss!

##### B. Light

1. We, of all people, are the keepers of the Light! We are the rightful owners of joy and love and peace. We are the only ones who can see and celebrate true beauty rightfully!

2. We should be robust in enjoying and sharing light everywhere we find it in our Father's world.
3. I like something Dan said at this time last year: Christians are the one who can truly say and experience a Merry Christmas!

C. The Call/The Response

1. What do you see when you look in the face of Jesus?
2. How does his call to leave behind your darkness and come into his light and life land upon you?
3. If you feel repelled, offended or at best ambivalent (for the young people here, that means "meh"), I urge you to cry out to God for mercy to break through your darkness and shine his light into your heart.
4. But If you feel compelled, pulled, drawn-in...that's amazing! Be encouraged! That means God is working in your heart. I urge you to respond to him.
5. What does that call concretely look like right now in your life? What is he calling you to leave behind? How is he calling you to step forward into his light?

V. Conclusion:

- A. To conclude I just want to read once again the passage from Isaiah 9 which I think sums up well what we've been pondering today.
- B. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.* (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 ESV)
- C. May God add his blessing to his Word.