

SERMON 22nd May 2022

GOD IS LIGHT.

**Scripture: 1 Tim 6:11-16 and
1 John 1:1-5.**



Light and darkness, we all know it.

We know from Genesis 1 to 4 that

God created light and darkness. Let us recall the exact words:

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Further on in Genesis 14 to 17 19 we read that: *And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.*

These are the good light and darkness. The light from the sun that brings forth the plants of the ground God blessed for without sun nothing grows and God also gave us rain. Then there is the darkness of night when those of us who, in these modern days, do not do shift work, can sleep and that enables our bodies to gain the rest we need.

Yet, there is also another set of light and darkness, also known as good and evil. Light is good and darkness is evil and that darkness came into the world through the machinations of Satan who slithered as a snake up to Adam and Eve and tempted them to sin to which temptation they succumbed and so began the sad history of humankind's continual and regular succumbing to sin to this day.

Yet God is love and God is light. He created the universe and humankind out of love. He did not give up on humankind way back when sinning began but set in motion His plan for the salvation of humankind through the sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus Christ. It would take eons but His plan finally came to fruition around 2,000 years ago.

There were many who believed, and hoped, that with the death of Jesus on the Cross, His message would be forgotten however it was not for there came the Resurrection and the return of Jesus Christ who was the first fruits of those who sleep.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ raised those who followed Him from despair to action and began the spread of what now is known as Christianity across the world and the millennia until today and for how many days God has granted humankind.

We read in Acts and the Epistles of the spread of the Word across the ancient world of the Roman Empire. We read in the Letters of St Paul of

his encouragement and, at times his admonitions towards those who had accepted Jesus as Saviour. One of these was Timothy.

Who was Timothy?

We read in Acts 16: 1 that he was a native of Lystra which was located in Galatia, an area now within modern Turkey. His mother, Eunice, and his maternal grandmother, Lois, were both Jewish however his father was Greek. It was his mother and grandmother who were the greatest influence on him as he grew up. His mixed marriage parentage meant that he was not circumcised as a baby but, as Paul wanted Timothy to join him on his mission work, he arranged for this to be done so that the Jews would accept him. Timothy became Paul's protégé and, perhaps, Paul began to think of him as a spiritual son, writing to him in a fatherly manner. Ultimately, Timothy became the Christian leader in Ephesus where St John, the Gospel writer, would also be located.

The Letter of 1 Timothy may have been written in 64AD, possibly just prior to Paul's final imprisonment in Rome. It is a letter written to counter the false teachings that had arisen in that city, a centre of worship to the idol goddess, Artemis, the Greek goddess of wild animals, the hunt, childbirth and chastity. There would be much agitation against the followers of Jesus Christ from those who carved idols.

The 1 Timothy text begins at verse 6:11 however it is interesting and relevant to consider the previous verses from verses 7 to 10 –

⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful

desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs”

Money has become an idol in our modern society, and there are people who will commit any foulness and deceit to gain it. I have had personal experience of this as I have been the victim of a scam. Love of money is greed. Money, itself is not evil; it is an inanimate object. It is the desire to have more by any means that is the evil. Money does not bring happiness.

What does bring happiness is the realisation that money does not bring us peace. No idol does. Only the love of God and the acceptance of Jesus in our lives will bring us peace because it brings righteousness into our lives.

Paul speaks of this to Timothy in verse 11, and we should take these words into our hearts.

Paul says, following on from his words about money, that –

you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

These are active words, not passive. We must be active in our faith, not merely thinking, “Well, I have accepted Jesus into my life, my mind and my heart, that’s all I need to do.”

Wrong! A resounding wrong!

I have used this analogy before, reminding people of the old hymn which states:

*Jesus bids us shine,
With a clear, pure light,
Like a little candle burning in the night;
In this world of darkness, we must shine,
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.*

There are two ways of being in a corner. We can look into that corner and, by doing so, we turn away from the world.

Or, we can look outwards from that corner, with our arms outstretched, remembering that every corner has something that leads to another corner

The rest of the hymn Jesus bids us shine states:

*Jesus bids us shine, first of all for Him
Well He sees and knows it if our light grows dim;
He looks down from Heaven to see us shine
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.*

*Jesus bids us shine, then, for all around,
Many kinds of darkness in the world abound;
Sin and want and sorrow, so we must shine,
You in your small corner
And I in mine.*

*Jesus bids us shine as we work for Him,
Bringing those that wander
from the paths of sin;
He will ever help us if we shine,
You in your small corner,
And I in mine.*

We, who have accepted Jesus into our lives must be active, not passive.

That does not mean we need to stand in the street, proclaiming our faith. It means that we use whatever gifts God has given us for His service. We use these gifts within our own families, among our neighbours and with those we pass in the street as we go about our daily lives.

There is a story I once read of a very successful man, a doctor if I recall correctly. He was being presented with a prestigious award. In his acceptance speech he mentioned a particular day in school where he was a target of continual bullying. That day after school he was trudging home and a boy from the school spoke kindly to him. That moment of kindness changed his life. He had planned to go home and commit suicide.

This story came as a huge shock to a man in the audience. He had been the boy who had spoken with kindness and they had been friends ever since. However not until then had he known what might have occurred.

That long ago act of kindness was an act of light. Was it random or was it God reaching down to a person in need? God is light and God is love. He acts and He acts through people. He acts through you and me if, or when, we are in a position to help someone else. We never know when that will occur. When that happens we are the light because, as we read

in 1 John 7 we are in fellowship with someone. That someone may not be aware of the situation however it comes down to the question – Who is our neighbour?

I live in a village where there are many who show no belief in Jesus. Some use His name in vain. They are still neighbours and I am in fellowship with them. There are some who follow Christ in the village yet they are rarely in general contact with others. They may be in contact with those who live in their immediate vicinity but do not become involved with others as a wider social contact. There are legitimate reasons for this, such as health problems. Yet, Jesus came to save sinners. As followers of Jesus Christ we must strive to emulate Him by bringing light to others. Have you heard the saying - *Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ?*

Bringing a friend to Christ is to bring a friend into the light.

The light is God who forgives our sins. None of us is without sin. All of us should pray – *God, have mercy on me a sinner.* This was the prayer of the publican that Jesus contrasted against the boasting of the Pharisee.

We read in 1 John 8 –

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

This is a matter for all of us to consider. We are not perfect. We will never perfect. However we can strive to be so. This is the battle we must

face every day of our lives until we meet Jesus face to face. We must ask ourselves this question: Do we have the faith and the courage to face Him today?

I will end with a prayer.

O God,
from whom light rises in the darkness for those who seek you
grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties,
the grace to ask you what you would have us do,
that in your light we may see light,
and in your narrow paths may not stumble;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

