

Sermon by The Rev. Dn. Robert Millott

Sunday Dec.29, 2019 Saint Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. AMEN

When we read John's Gospel, we are reading something that was written around 100 generations ago. Now that is a long time!

Each of the four Gospels were written by different people for different groups of people and their Gospels each have a unique beginning. That means as readers we can learn much from these introductions or prologues, as they are called. These introductions or prologues tell us of what the author's intentions are in writing their particular Gospel book. We can also learn from these first words what the author's purpose is and something about the particular book, and also something about Jesus. The Gospel of John was written primarily for both the Jews and Gentiles who were living in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond towards the end of the first century A.D. Now the Gospel of John starts off differently from the other Gospels. He gives us no explanation or title of why he wrote the Gospel.

John goes way back in time in his opening words. He goes back beyond time and before creation. He chose his words because he wanted the Prologue to be a model after the creation account in Genesis. He explains Jesus has existed with God, as God—God the Creator of the universe, God whom Jesus calls "Father."

John's Gospel begins with these words: 1. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. He was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."* The books of Genesis and John each start off with *"in the beginning"*. Moses and John wrote these three words for a specific reason. They wanted to convey a transition from the temporal or worldly to the eternal reality. The readers of John's Gospel knew these three words because they were Greek. John was writing to the Greeks in particular because they had not heard the Gospel yet. The essence of John's gospel is about the eternal. These three words, *"in the beginning"* reminds Jewish readers of Genesis. When they do this, they think of a worldly meaning whereas John is thinking eternal reality which is the essence of his Gospel. For the Greek reader the words can also be translated *"In principle"* or models itself after the creation account in Genesis. Both prologues from Genesis and John

area creation from God's Word – the supreme principal of the universe is not only a bond of unity but a call for existence. In other words it is because of God's nature to reveal and communicate Himself that there is a world at all. Everything in it, every occurrence in time and space is subject to this controlling fact. That the world exists as a place for God's supremacy.

Both Genesis and John's Gospel speak of darkness and light coming in to being at God's word. The light overcame the darkness. Now after light and darkness God creates everything else through the Word. In Genesis the light that overcame darkness is the light that we see with. The Light John refers to is the Light of Christ. John knows about the darkness of the world in his time and in chapter 12:31-32 he gives us Jesus' words how the darkness is overcome. *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* Now you may ask if Jesus defeated Satan why do we still have darkness. Satan is not dead so he continues to drive a wedge between us and God. Just as He did to the Jews in the Old Testament. The Jews turned their backs on God and became more interested in material things and in worshiping Baal and other false gods. That is why we need to be vigilant. When Jesus died on the Cross, Satan was defeated, but he has not given up and tries to separate us from God daily. False prophets and teachers are still out there, but thanks be to God we can overcome darkness and have eternal life.

As Paul tells us in Roman3:23-24 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Now in James 2:14-17 we read "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

John continues in verse 4 "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. With these two sentences the interpretation for Christian and non-Christian begins to diverge. In John's day non-Christians, Jews and Gentiles thought Life is not said to be a product of its action as the world is, but rather one of its own inherent characteristics. When we pass from the inert thing to the living creature, we reach

a stage where there is something in common between the creature and creative principle besides bare existence.

For a Christian reader a new interpretation is present. Jesus is the “light” and as the light brings to this dark world true knowledge, moral purity, and the light that shows the very presence of God. Only Jesus is wholly in the Logos or Word and Jesus is truly life—so that all true Life in us is drawn from Him. As He alone is truly Life. In all periods, but most especially in the period of Jesus’ ministry here on earth, the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Most if not all of you are familiar with what a light house is. I grew up in northern Ohio on the shores of Lake Erie where there are still some light houses. One of my favorites is Marble Head light house near Port Clinton. Years ago, I had a travel trailer and stayed up there for several summers driving up from Cleveland after work on Fridays. Many of you may have even seen one or more light houses. On our last trip back in September we stopped on the west coast of Italy and visited Amalfi where there is still a light house you can rent if you are interested. Now imagine if you will, that you are walking along a secluded beach at night. In front of you some distance away is a light house casting its beacon of light in one direction. This is the light that John is trying to convey. The light from the light house only lights up a small portion at a time. The light doesn’t last but goes away for a few moments then comes back.

As Jesus spoke His Light was seen but did not remove the darkness around. Even His Apostles had doubts until His resurrection.

The next few verses tell us about John the Baptist. John was Jesus’s relative and was born before Jesus was born. John was about 6 months older than Jesus. John also began his ministry several years before Jesus began his ministry John was known as a prophet. Prior to John the Baptist there had been no prophets for about 600 years because Israel was living in darkness. They had rejected what the prophets had been warning them so God abandoned them. He still loved them and that is why he sent His Son in hopes that by doing this they may return from darkness and be filled with the light of Jesus.

The Word, Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among us. Dwelt is more than pitching a tent. Jesus grew up from a baby being raised by Mary and Joseph. He grew into a man and began His ministry to save us. His birth that we just celebrated last week

was an amazing event in the history of the world. God created the world through the Word, Jesus, and then sent Him to save it.

Through God's Son we, undeserving as we are, received His grace. Grace is the unmerited blessing and joy given to us without us doing anything to deserve it.

Because God has so much love for us, he sent His Son so that we can have eternal life. All we have to do is believe in His Son and by doing this we will be energized to let the light of Christ shine thru us that others may see Him in us. By having faith in Jesus, we should be sharing the light of Him to others by helping and doing good works. Doing good works without faith gets us nothing, but because we love Jesus and believe He is the Son of God we are motivated to want to do good works.

There is so much darkness in the world today and by each of us doing something for others the darkness will be overcome.

Several weeks ago, Deacon Diane had some gift boxes in the back for shirts and toys. That was one of the ways that you let the light of Christ shine through you, and by letting the light of Christ shine through you – we can help establish the Kingdom here through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And now as Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven.”*