

# “Light That Brings Sight”

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

### *John 3:14-21*

**“But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God” John 3:21**

The Gospel according to St. John has once been described as “a pool shallow enough for a child to wade but deep enough for an elephant to swim.” The reason for the quote is because the Gospel writer describes the person and work of Jesus with such simple and everyday concepts like water, bread, a vine and branches, and sheep with their shepherd.

The concepts are easy enough to grasp. They are concepts common to life. A child understands water and bread. A child can see that branches connected to a vine grow grapes. A child knows what sheep are and what sound they make. A child can see that sheep need to be led by a shepherd that cares about keeping them safe. Yes, a child can easily wade through the pool that is the Gospel of John and happily splash around.

At the same time, when applied to the person and work of Jesus, the theological meaning of water, bread, vine and branches, and sheep with their shepherd in the Gospel of John seems bottomless. There is room for deep and rich reflection. There is room for an elephant to happily swim.

In the very last verses of our Gospel reading according to St. John we discovered one of these every day, simple concepts that boasts profound theological meaning. That concept is the comparison between “light and darkness.”

Jesus says “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God” (Vv. 19-21).

It is easy to understand the differences between light and darkness that Jesus is speaking about. Even a child can understand the differences. Actions done in light are seen. And so we have our phrase, “Let us shed some light on this situation.” Things can be clearly seen in the light. The light will expose all things for what they truly are. Thus, we use flash on our cameras in order to get a better picture. We make sure there is good lighting in places like our sanctuary. We want to make sure parking lots are well lit. We want to take advantage of the characteristic of light, natural or artificial, to expose things and make it so things are more clearly seen.

In darkness, however, things are not seen very easily. Actions done in darkness are not easily seen. The darkness hides things. And so we have our phrase, “This casts a shadow over the situation.” Things we don’t want exposed we keep in the dark. People might literally do things in the dark that they don’t want seen. It is no coincidence that a lot of criminal or otherwise inappropriate activity is done in the cover of darkness.

We can also metaphorically keep actions and words and thoughts in the dark when we keep them to ourselves. Sometimes it is appropriate to keep things in the dark in this way, a surprise or a secret that we are eventually planning to reveal publically. Other times we might keep things in the dark that should be revealed but we never plan to reveal them. We know what kinds of things these are. They might be the actions, thoughts, and words that we know are wrong. We know they are wrong because we feel guilty about them. We feel ashamed. They are our private actions, thoughts, and words that we keep secret and hide. We keep them in the dark because we are afraid of what might happen if they are brought into the light. We are afraid of others finding out about. We are afraid of what happens when the secret is no longer a secret. In this case we try to persuade darkness to be our friend. But even in the darkness the guilt and shame exposes our actions, thoughts, and words for the wrong they truly are.

The only solution is to bring into the light our private actions, thoughts, and words that we try to hide and keep secret. Then they can be seen for what they are. Then those actions, thoughts, and words can be dealt with.

The act of confession serves this very purpose. We all participated in this act of confession at the beginning of the service. We have the opportunity to bring our private actions, thoughts, and words into the light. We bring them before God. We confess them as wrong. We confess them as immoral. We confess them as sin. We acknowledge that this Sin has consequences. That when we Sin in these ways and others, we Sin against our God and against one another—our spouses, our children, our brothers and sisters, our coworkers, our fellow parishioners, our neighbors.

How many of us miss this opportunity to bring our Sin into the light and lay it before God? We might miss this opportunity by skipping Church where we can do it together as God’s people. We might miss this opportunity at home by failing to confess our sins to God privately in prayer or even to our family members and friends when necessary. We might even miss this opportunity to expose those sins even when we are in Church and actually speak the words because we just say the words and never name the sins, bringing them into the light, one by one.

I want to encourage all of you especially during this season of Lent—a time for a renewed emphasis on confession and repentance—to make a habit of exposing the struggles, the Sin, the wrong actions, words, and thoughts. I want to encourage you to bring them into the light.

I want to encourage you to make a habit of confession and bringing your Sin and sinful struggles into the light because it is meant to make us feel good. I know, it takes courage. But confession to God and to

one another is not meant to make us feel bad. It is meant to make us feel good. It is meant to make us feel good because the light is where God meets us and gives us his forgiveness.

St. John tells us elsewhere in his Gospel that Jesus is the light of the world (Jn 8:12-30). When this light of the world died on the cross we learn that darkness covered the whole land. In Jerusalem and around it darkness covered the land at the hour of Jesus' death. But on the cross shone the light of the world. The light that comes to meet us and the world in darkness. Satan thought he could snuff it out. But on the Sunday morning following Jesus' crucifixion sunlight poured into the tomb of Jesus to scatter the darkness and expose the tomb for what it was—empty! God met the darkness and depravity of human Sin and death as its consequence and he won for us.

And so now we can bring our Sin and the struggles of the flesh to the one who is the light of the world. And there he meets us. And there he gives us his forgiveness. And he is glad to do it not seven times but seventy times seven times for all who come with repentant hearts. So let us ask God for the courage to live repentant lives in which we continually come to the light with our sinful words, thoughts and deeds to receive forgiveness, life, and salvation. To receive the Christ. For, "Whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God" (Jn 3:21). Amen.