

Second Sunday after Christmas

LONGING FOR LIGHT

John 1:[1-9] 10-18

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Analysis by Bill White

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 came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through

Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

I offer the following commentary from Fred Craddock as a preliminary note:

"It may be well to observe at the outset that this text is experiential; that is to say, the writer savors again in the telling the recent meeting with God through the person of Jesus Christ. According to this Gospel the fundamental human longing is for God. This has been true from the moment Adam stirred in the moist clay until our present straining to see beyond the heights to catch one glimpse of ultimate reality. In fact, to know God is life eternal (17:3). But since no one has ever seen God (1:18), Philip speaks for all of us when he says to Jesus, 'Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied' (14:8). It is, therefore, to all of us that Jesus replies, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (14:9), or as the Prologue expresses it, 'the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known' (1:18). To call this text experiential, then, is to be reminded that it is not a doctrinal statement in which an understanding of God is used to explain who Jesus Christ is. Rather, the experience of Jesus was for the Johannine church an experience of God."

Craddock, Fred B. John (Knox Preaching Guides, John H. Hayes, Editor). Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982, page 9.

DIAGNOSIS: Living and Dying in the Dark

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Longing for Light in Our Darkness

Living in a world darkened by sin, evil, and death, we long for a “light” to rescue us. According to the author of the Gospel of John-whether we realize it or not, whether we believe it or not-this longing is actually a longing for God. (I believe it was Rudolf Bultmann who said in effect that even though we live on this side of The Fall, there remains within all people a “faint recollection of the Garden of Eden.”) In his prologue John tells us, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (v. 9). What’s more, God sent John the Baptist as a witness to “testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.” (v. 7)

The problem is that even though God sent folks like Moses and John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus, the true Light, we either did not recognize him or accept him (vv. 10-11). And the problem remains. We live in this darkened world longing for light; the true Light has come, but we do not recognize or accept Jesus. Instead, we seek other “lights” to satisfy our longings.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Believing in the Dark*

This seeking of other “lights” to satisfy our longings reveals our deeper problem. Rather than fearing, loving, and trusting the Light in the Word that became flesh, we look to other “lights” to save us from the darkness. These false “lights” come in a variety of forms. It may be the false light of faith in someone other than Jesus. It may be the false light of believing we have become so enlightened on our own that we saved ourselves from darkness. For some it is the false light of believing there is no hope, there is nothing to satisfy the longings, as in the bumper sticker: “Life’s a bit_ _, and then you die.”

For those living their lives believing in anything and everything other than Jesus, the true Light, life is a life

lived believing in the dark.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Dying in the Dark*

The situation is even worse for those living in darkness and placing their trust in the false lights of this world. By failing to recognize and accept Jesus, the true Light, we are left powerless to become children of God. We are left to be condemned by the law given through Moses. We are left to die in the dark.

PROGNOSIS: Living and Life in the Light

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The True Light Overcomes the Dark*

The Good News is that God does not desire to leave us in the dark to die. This Word of God who is the true Light became flesh and lived among us (v. 14). Moreover, Jesus the true Light takes on all the powers of sin, evil, and darkness, conquering them through the cross of Golgotha and empty tomb of Easter. As John says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (v. 5)

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Believing in the Light*

Even better, the power of this Good News that Jesus is God's true Light overcoming all darkness is offered to us personally, making God known to us. We receive from Jesus the gift of faith, true faith that replaces all of the false "lights" we had believed in. As John proclaims, "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (vv.16-18).

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Living in the Light*

Better still, we are empowered to daily live in Jesus, the true Light, and empowered to make this true Light known to others in this darkened world: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (vv.12-13). As children of God we, like John the Baptist, are given power to be witnesses, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him (v.7). By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, God will use us to shine the light for others-that Jesus is the true Light to deliver them from life in darkness, to know and accept that Jesus has come to truly satisfy their longing.