

Christmas Day

SPEAKING LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

John 1:1-14

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Analysis by Eric W. Evers

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 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.

DIAGNOSIS: Silent

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Speechless*

It was the Tuesday night before Thanksgiving; I was at the

funeral home for the calling hours for my senior pastor's 21 year-old learning disabled, epileptic daughter who had just died suddenly and unexpectedly. The room was packed with shell-shocked parishioners, family, and friends. One young man of deep faith shook my hand and said, "I just hugged them and said I'm sorry. I know if I tried to say anything, it would be stupid." He was probably right; as my senior pastor said, when he called to tell me of his daughter's death, "There are no words." When a child dies; when cancer recurs; when nations wage war; when "suicide bomber" becomes a regularly-used phrase; there are no words for such times. No rationalization, no reason, no purpose. And in the face of these situations without logic, there is no logos, no word worth saying. Sin, death, and evil all invade and distort and destroy in ways that leave us speechless, without words of explanation or comfort.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Darkness*

Silence leads to darkness. Without an enlightening word, the world with its evil is shrouded in darkness. It's not just that we don't know what to say in the face of suffering, it's that our hearts and minds are darkened. Our vision is constrained by the horizon of the visible, the tangible, and the reasonable. And viewed in that context, things are indeed dark. What we see is fallenness; what we feel is brokenness; what we can reasonably expect is that nothing could will ever come of it all.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Unaccepted*

This darkness is deep indeed. We are so enshrouded by it, in fact, that when God does speak a Word, even a Word made flesh, we do not accept it (vv. 10-11). It is foolish, after all, a Word as weak as a newborn baby's cry! What can he do to make sense of the world? How can this word bring comfort? It is not the answer we want, an answer that excuses and vindicates us. And so we refuse to listen. We refuse to accept the one Word

that can make us acceptable. Indeed, we cut off the saving Speech with nails and a cross and a crown of thorns. With ears and hearts closed, we have aligned ourselves with the darkness. We rightly deserve silence and darkness that are eternal.

PROGNOSIS: Speaking grace

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal solution) – *Speech*

We may have nothing left to say, but God has a Word to speak, a Word of glory, grace, and truth made flesh for our salvation (vs. 14). Into our silence and darkness, God speaks, and Jesus is born, not to condemn, but to rescue and pardon. We are redeemed, not because we can solve the riddle of evil or give an answer that banishes suffering, but because in Christ, God chooses to speak the last Word, and that is a living, fleshly word of mercy.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *A Word that works light*

This saving Word enlightens, but not in some abstract, Gnostic manner. He brings light by taking on flesh and dwelling among us. Intellectualized enlightenment (“solving” those riddles of life) is not only impossible, it is useless. The true knowledge of God comes not through logical brainpower, but by the (Word) Logos coming to us in a way we can grasp: by hearing, eating, drinking, washing, and believing. Light is shed on our world, not in a way that makes the problem of suffering go away, but that casts it in a new light, or a new context: in Christ, God is at work to redeem this broken world. The already / not-yet reality creates hope, which can give the spirit new life even in the face of suffering.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Something worth saying*

And thus we are no longer reduced to silence. We have something worth saying, even in the darkest of days! God has drawn near in

Christ; his Word has become flesh and dwells among us. We can point a lost and broken world to Jesus among us in the water of the font, the bread and wine of the table, and the word that is proclaimed. We can put “flesh” on our words, too, extending care and service to the neighbor in need freely, because we know that the final word of redemption and mercy has been spoken. That’s something to speak, sing, share, and shout!