

Where Does Your Light Shine? – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Pastor Colin Rieke – February 5, 2017

¹ And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

It hardly would seem necessary for Joshua to have to say it, but he did. Joshua, the leader of Israel for their conquest of the Promised Land, hardly should have needed to remind the people about God's power and might. The Israelites had seen God's power first hand as he drove out the heathen nations who occupied the land that is today called Israel. And yet, Joshua knew how forgetful the people could be. He had witnessed it his whole life – from growing up in Egypt he watched as the elders chastised Moses for aggravating Pharaoh, thus making their slavery harder. He watched as God delivered his people through the Red Sea, only to have the nation begin to grumble about not having food. He watched as Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments, only to have Moses' brother Aaron build an idol of gold for the people to worship. He witnessed first-hand the people's timidity to enter the Promised Land which resulted in their wandering through the desert for another 38 years.

Yes, Joshua had seen a lot in his lifetime, and he knew that no matter how much God poured out his love and blessing upon the Israelites, he knew how apt they were to stray. And so it was with the words which we have recorded for us in our first lesson that he set out to remind the people. He reminded them of all the Lord had done for them. He exhorted them to get rid of any other idols they had in their personal possession and instead worship the Lord and the Lord only. Joshua reminded them to worship the Lord not only for what he had already done for them, but for what he promised them.

It was a promise fulfilled by none other than Jesus, the Savior of the world. It was this promise that Joshua, along with the rest of the Old Testament pointed toward. It is a promise we heard repeated with the Verse of the Day when Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."** And it's a promise that the Apostle Paul pointed towards in his letter to the Corinthian Christians. Paul, like Joshua before him, knew how easy it is to turn away from this promise, Paul knew how quick people could grasp on to other things. And he used his ministry as an example of how they were to live. To not rely on eloquence or human wisdom, but to let your light shine by pointing only to Christ. Paul knew that each person with their words and actions shines a light. And he wanted to make sure that light was shining in the right direction. And so he asks the question, WHERE DOES YOUR LIGHT SHINE?

1. Don't underestimate the darkness
2. Don't underestimate God's power

(1)

It's a common enough theme in the Bible that Jesus is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. It's a common enough reminder that we are drawn to the light of Jesus when we believe what he did for us. But what we want to focus on this morning is not only Jesus being the light of the world, not only us being drawn toward the light, but how our light shines, how our life reflects the Jesus we follow. This is what Jesus talked about in the sermon on the Mount, when he called for believers to be salt of the earth, and lights in the world. He was talking about SHINING YOUR LIGHT.

And so it was with Paul. Like we've been reminded the last few weeks, the Christians who called Corinth home had a number of difficulties in their church, they had a number of problems. And Paul was concerned about this for two reasons. He was concerned for their own faith and sought to guide them back to Christ, but he was also concerned about how their actions did nothing to draw others to Christ. And so he sought to ask them, WHERE DOES YOUR LIGHT SHINE?

Paul took them back to the time when he first arrived in Corinth, a city full of cultural significance, a city full of distractions. He told them about his light and where it shone when he arrived in Corinth. When he arrived at Corinth, he was not the typical travelling orator. He was not the usual fly-by-night salesmen with a slick pitch to make. No, he came very plainly, he didn't speak with high and lofty words, and he didn't come with an entourage to back up his words. Simply put Paul said, **"I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."**

Paul knew the lure of eloquence and human wisdom. It was this eloquence that filled the Greek debate halls, it was a wisdom that sought to make you healthy, wealthy and wise. In short, Paul knew much about the darkness surrounding Corinth and he didn't underestimate this darkness. This was not a physical darkness, but a spiritual darkness. A darkness that fills the whole world apart from Christ. It was a darkness the Christians in Corinth were up against, and Paul didn't want them to underestimate the darkness. And Paul knew the only way to overcome the darkness is through the simple witness about God, Jesus Christ and him crucified. This was WHERE PAUL'S LIGHT SHONE, and he encouraged the Corinthians to do likewise.

The world in which we live is not all that different than the world in which the Corinthians lived. The same battle between light and darkness still exists. It's a battle that we cannot fully fathom. I say that, because while there are plenty of black and white distinctions in our world today – this is bad, that is good, there is also an awful lot of grey area. And in fact, even some of the things that we view as good – such as loving people, helping the poor, may not be as good as we think they are. Don't get me wrong, these may be things that are good for our world, but that doesn't mean they are part of the light that Paul is talking about, it doesn't mean that they are part of the light that the Bible talks about.

When the Bible talks about light and darkness, it talks about Jesus being the light. Not just a light, but the light, and outside of Christ, everything is darkness. That includes us by nature. In our confession

of sins at the beginning of every service, we confess, “I am by nature sinful,” not just by my thoughts words and actions, but my very nature. This is what King David confessed in the Psalms, “**Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**” And so when we think about WHERE DOES OUR LIGHT SHINE, we must not underestimate the darkness – both the darkness in the world, and the darkness within ourselves.

Now, thankfully, God has drawn us into the light of Jesus, he has forgiven our sins by Jesus’ sacrifice for us. But it is precisely because we have been drawn into the light of Jesus that we must not underestimate the darkness. Because the devil, from which the darkness originates is constantly at work in and around your life trying not only to extinguish your light, but to make sure your light doesn’t shine out like God wants it to. The devil is constantly at work trying to chip away at your faith, a little bit here, a little bit there, he is constantly convincing you not to let your light shine. He does it through those little voices which say, “you don’t need to open your Bible today, you know it already,” or “it would be really awkward to invite someone to church.”

But it’s precisely because the darkness is so dark that we need to let our light shine. That we need to shine our light back to Jesus, where the source for our light comes from. This is what Paul did, “**he resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified.**”

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Just think about how many other things Paul could have focused on while he was in Corinth. Corinth was a city of a million problems. Like many larger cities today, Paul could see social, economic, and educational problems. Which problem was Paul to deal with first? Paul determined to deal exclusively with the one that had eternal consequences.

It is this problem having eternal consequences that God is especially equipped to handle. Paul said that while “**I came in weakness with great fear and trembling**” and “**my message was not with wise and persuasive words,**” the Holy Spirit demonstrated his power. What kind of power was this that the Holy Spirit demonstrated? He demonstrated the power to raise to life what was dead. He raised spiritually dead people, and made them alive in faith, he brought them to the light of the gospel, he caused them to believe in Jesus as their Savior. This is the power of the Holy Spirit that Paul was referring to. He was saying it wasn’t his words that convinced them, but it was the Holy Spirit. This is more powerful than we realize.

For just as it is easy for us to underestimate the darkness around us, we have a tendency to underestimate God’s power. We have a tendency to think that God’s Word really isn’t that powerful. We can have a tendency to think nobody will listen. But don’t underestimate God’s power. Because it is critical to shining your light. Remember, you aren’t the one supplying the power to your light, God is, and it is God’s light that is powerful. Remember, it had the power to draw you in, it had the power to change your life, it had the power to motivate you to be a better friend, neighbor and co-worker, it also has the power to change other people’s lives as well.

In a few weeks, I will be embarking on an incredible relay race called Ragnar. It’s a 2-day relay race that runs through the night. One of the requirements is to have a headlamp for obvious reasons. Just

think about how difficult it would be to run in the dark without a headlamp? It would be just as difficult (not to mention foolish) to run in the dark when you have a headlamp, but fail to turn it on. The same lesson is true for our earthly journey. We are running through the darkness and we have been given a light, we would be foolish to not let it shine. For when we let our light shine, we know where we're going, and we can draw others to the light of God as well. Amen.