



## Opening to the Light of Christ

An address for the Cosmic Mass on the Third Sunday of Advent  
14<sup>th</sup> December 2008 ● Rev Lukas

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.*

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

*1 John 1:1-7*

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. The third Advent banner has been added to the wall. Today the words on the banner from the hymn 'O come, O come Emmanuel' relate to dispersing the gloomy clouds of night. The Scripture just read also relates to this subject:

*While we walk in darkness...we do not live according to truth...but if we walk in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.*

This sequence of ideas is what I have been contemplating for today's address.

The well-known verses from the beginning of St John's Gospel speak to us about light and darkness:

*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

The final verse is often translated in the following way:

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has comprehended it not.*

The light of Christ is shining yet darkness does not see it or understand it. Darkness does not want to receive this light.

To varying degrees, this verse speaks of us and describes our consciousness today as individuals.

How many of us remain conscious as we enter the spiritual worlds during sleep at night? Generally we remain in spiritual darkness. And how many of us as we go about our daily life, awake to the world of the sense, are able to maintain a conscious presence in the spiritual

worlds? Most of us are again asleep to spirit and we remain in spiritual darkness. Our inability indicates that the darkness of our consciousness does not as yet comprehend the light.

Yes indeed ,we do want the light of Christ, but usually we put conditions on this wanting. For example:

- Condition 1: that we remain comfortable.
- Condition 2: that there be no pain involved.
- Condition 3: that there shall be no need to change our lives in any way.

If we explore the early part of the Gospel of St John we come across descriptions of various hindrances to receiving the light of Christ – hindrances that maintain attachment to darkness.

The descriptions are of how different individuals respond to Christ when they meet him and how their relationship develops over time. The descriptions can be understood as being metaphors for how we may relate to the light of Christ in the here and now.

### **Doubtful Thinking**

In John Chapter 1, we read how Jesus calls Phillip and then how Phillip tells Nathanael about Jesus. Phillip said: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

In simple terms, Nathanael is expressing doubt. Doubt occurs when something does not fit with our mental concepts. Doubt has to do with our thinking life.

Jesus later convinces Nathanael to let go of the doubt, to loosen his rigid thinking. He then says to him, “You shall see greater things than these... Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

Jesus is telling Nathanael that his thinking will be spiritualised, and that he will enter the world of spiritual sight, seeing into the realm of the angels, once his doubt has fallen away.

### **Feelings of Antipathy**

The second example relates to the feeling life of soul.

In Chapter 3 of John’s gospel we read how Nicodemus, a Pharisee comes to Jesus by night - that is, he comes to Jesus in a consciousness of darkness. Nicodemus calls Jesus ‘Rabbi’, or teacher. So we can assume that Nicodemus had a motivation to be taught. Jesus responds by saying that to enter the kingdom of God, to enter the light, one needs to be born anew. Nicodemus responds with the words, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

These words of Nicodemus can be interpreted in many ways. There may be doubtful thoughts present. But the words spoken by him have a flavour of derision. There is an element of mockery here. “You want me to go back into my mother’s womb and be born again.” When we scratch the surface of mockery, in everyday conversation, what we find underneath is typically a feeling of antipathy towards something. In some cases, it is a feeling of hatred.

So here Jesus is confronted with the feeling life of Nicodemus, and perhaps that of the Pharisees in general. Jesus responds with, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” And Jesus continues for some time with further teaching.

Following this, we read the words of the writer of the gospel:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and men **loved darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil **hates the light** and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.*

Here John speaks of loving darkness and hating light - the extremes of our feeling life, sympathy and antipathy. He indicates that a feeling of hatred keeps us away from the light of Christ, and ensures that we stay in darkness.

As for Nicodemus, we do read of him later in John's gospel. In chapter 7 he tries to convince the Pharisees to give Jesus a chance, to allow Jesus to prove himself first, before being prematurely judged and condemned by the Pharisees.

This quality of not being swayed by feelings of like or dislike is an ability of the developed heart and feeling life. So perhaps Nicodemus took notice of Jesus and was changing himself, refining and balancing his feeling life. Later in chapter 19 Nicodemus is mentioned again by John as being one who assisted with the care and burial of the body of Jesus.

### **Fear and the Will**

The third hindrance relates to the soul faculty of the will. Early in the Gospel of John (chapter 1), we read how Andrew after meeting Jesus tells his brother Simon that he had 'found the Messiah.' Andrew takes Simon to Jesus. Jesus says to Simon, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which we know means rock or Peter).

Simon does not say anything at this point. But as the gospel progresses we do of course read more about him and his trials and tribulations. Perhaps we know more about his struggles than that of any of the other disciples.

In the Gospel of John we read how Peter cuts off the ear of a soldier in the Garden of Gethsemane, and is then chastised by Jesus for an incorrect deed.

However the most significant episode relates to Simon Peter denying his connection with Jesus three times. Peter was afraid of the consequences of revealing himself. It was a dangerous situation. Jesus had been arrested. Peter was afraid that he would also be in danger if he revealed his association with Jesus. Now these denials can be understood as coming from an experience of fear.

The earlier episode of drawing his sword against the soldier may also have sprung from an impulse of fear. An impulse not tempered by balanced feeling and thought.

Fear prevents us from acting in truth. It prevents us from walking the path with Christ, from deeds imbued with light and truth. Fear maintains a consciousness of spiritual darkness.

And as we read in the first letter of St John:

In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

## Advent and Christmas

We have looked at three examples of how we remain attached to darkness - three hindrances to the advent of the light of Christ in our lives:

- Doubt in our thinking life,
- Hatred in our feeling life, and
- Fear in our willing life.

As was read earlier from the First Letter of St John:

While we walk in darkness...we do not live according to truth...but if we walk in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

So each time we allow doubt to subside, each time we choose to balance our feeling life, and each time we allow our experience of the love of Christ to be greater than our fear, then our errors, the patterns of karma, are cleansed, and our darkened consciousness becomes enlightened. Each time we do this, we can say that Christ is present within us. Christ is with us as a companion.

This Advent and Christmas season let us again take the opportunity to open ourselves to the light of Christ.

So shall it be.

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