

Sermon 2023 03 10 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

=====

John 3.14-21

¹⁹ And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'

=====

The theme of our Lenten study this week was that harmony is a mixture of dark and light.

But that seems to be a contradiction to our Gospel reading where "...those who do what is true come to the light..." and "...all who do evil hate the light..."

=====

The Gospel seems to say that good is 100% light, and that evil is 100% darkness.

=====

So why would our study speak of harmony, being a mixture of light and dark? It seems to say that harmony is 50% good and 50% evil.

And I struggled with this. I consulted the resident artist about what you get when you mix 50% white with 50% black – and the answer is very simple – 100% grey. But I cannot see harmony as a state of absolute greyness.

But black and white are not light and dark. And the Gospel does not say that evil is pure darkness or that good is pure light, even though we speak of Jesus as bringing absolute light into the world.

We have read of the transfiguration several times leading up to Lent.

But when Jesus was transfigured into pure dazzling light the disciples could not look upon him. Jesus is pure and Jesus has a purity of light, but is it necessary for Jesus to drive out all darkness?

=====

To find harmony, while at the same time exposing the good and the bad, we have to find a point that is not perfect darkness but is also not perfect light.

=====

Do people understand the concept of a Koan? In Buddhist philosophy it is a statement or a question that is a paradox and appears to have a limitless number of answers or no answers.

You may be familiar with two statements: -
What is the sound of one hand clapping? or
If a tree falls in the forest does anybody hear?

Or a third statement, if a man is talking, and there are only men present, is he still wrong?

=====

It struck me that harmony as a mixture of light and dark is in the tradition of the Buddhist Koan.

Almost 50 years of getting up at 5am, have given me rich images of detail growing out of the darkness and emerging into the fulness of its reality.

Similarly, almost 50 years of driving into the western sun has exposed me to the danger of things not seen because it is too bright.

=====

Evil exists in perfect darkness, but the minute you strike a single match – a mere pinprick of light – in the absolute darkness details begin to emerge and evil begins to recede.

The evil hidden in the darkness is weak. It begins to die the moment even the smallest light begins to come to life.

=====

There is a simple truth here. Our harmony is a mixture of light and dark. It is not a mixture of equal light and dark; but it is sufficient that the good can be honoured and the bad destroyed.

Truth is to be found at a place where there is exactly enough light for us to see with absolute clarity, but there is still enough detail that we do not lose the clarity in a blinding light.

=====

Harmony is the perfect point on the spectrum from absolute darkness to absolute light which allows us to see with perfect clarity.

The faith statement that Christ is the light is not lost or diminished in this place of harmony. Harmony is achieved when evil is destroyed and good is allowed to flourish.

But in the frailty of this world we may not stand in fulness of light – we lack the capacity to stand, permanently in the fulness of light. These frail earthen vessels begin to crack when exposed to permanent light. We cannot rest, we cannot see clearly, our sight is diminished and the moisture is drained from our bodies.

When we take on new bodies in the resurrection, our bodies will change; they will have the capacity to live in pure light alone.

Until then we must live in a less intrusive light that allows us to see evil and reject while seeing good and receiving it.

The flaw in these bodies, our imperfections, do not allow for a full light, only for a salvation caught in half turned glances.

The harmony that we must accept until we are made whole is an economy of light and dark, so that we may know that which is good and reject that which is evil. In the imperfections of this life we are given sufficient power to embrace the good and reject evil – in that harmony we are able to travel the journey that leads to eternal light and eternal life.

=====