

Jesus brings LIGHT (participation service)

Reconnect – November 29, 2009

Text: John 1:1-9, 3:30-34, 1:10-13; 8:12

Key Thought: Jesus offers light: his life and hope to anyone who will humbly receive him as King.

"He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth, but he has come from heaven. He tells what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Those who believe him discover that God is true. For he is sent by God." John the Baptist, in John 3:30-34

Pre-Intro: song Nothing Compares (band)

Intro: Our reliance on light

- We rely on light, and we always have – from earliest times – daylight, fire, candles, electricity, even what comes from our screens – laptops and cell phones, the blue glow of TV sets all across Barrhaven
- “In the light, everything changes” – we’ve all stumbled through the dark before, stepped on a toy or someone’s leftover cheese sandwich – cursed the dark – and then realized, once we got the light on, that it wasn’t what we thought
- We’ve all had a sleepless night, where things seemed more and more grim – but then as we saw the sunrise, our spirits lifted
- There’s something about light – it gladdens us, it lifts our spirits, it gives us hope – it lets us see clearly both with our eyes, and sometimes more importantly, with our hearts

John: Jesus is the light

- It’s interesting, then, that in his biography of Jesus, John takes great pains to link Jesus with light – all the way through, first on the lips of Jesus’ cousin John the Baptist, and then even quoting Jesus himself
- There’s no more basic metaphor for enlightenment (there’s that word again) then or now – “in the light, everything changes”
- And when Jesus comes, everything changes – back then - and even now, in your life and mine

Read text: John 1:1-13 (read and comment)

In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn’t make. Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

God sent John the Baptist to tell everyone about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was only a witness to the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was going to come into the world.

But although the world was made through him, the world didn’t recognize him when he came. Even in his own land and among his own people, he was not accepted. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan – this rebirth comes from God.

John 1:1-13

One man's change: John the Baptist:

- Great sounding words – noble – they resonate – majestic – but sometimes, distant
- The gap between hearing them and living them – the distance between our ears, our minds, our hearts – sometimes it can seem like light years, not a foot and a half
- But this is what John the Baptist lived – at the height of his success, he could have had it all – he could have founded the movement, he could have been the change, he could have had the recognition and the organization, the devotion and the influence
- But at the pivotal moment, when his cousin comes wandering down to the riverside, with the grime of his last day as a contractor still on his hands, this is what he says:

“He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth, but he has come from heaven. He tells what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Those who believe him discover that God is true. For he is sent by God.” John the Baptist, in John 3:30-34

- “He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less” – that seems so counter-intuitive – where's the payoff? What will it lead to?
- Sacrifice is not unknown in our world – but we see it most often in *quid pro quo* – where you give up one thing, and then you ultimately get something back in return – a transaction, an investment, a momentary setback – like an MP giving up their seat so the party leader can get into the House, and then they receive a Senate appointment or an ambassadorship in a few short years
- But are we willing to live out what John the Baptist did? The only thing HE got from the switch was that he was beheaded by a vain, pompous dictator who made a drunken promise and then found himself held to it
- “He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less” – John's words ring across the ages between then and now

Key Thought:

Jesus offers light: his life and hope to anyone who will humbly receive him as King.

Jesus said to the people: “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” (John 8:12, NLT)

Conclusion: Communion at Christmas

- The baby, coming as King – the paradox – just as offensive and difficult now as it was then, whether Jesus was days old or thirty years old or gone for 2000 years
- Why should anyone else – REALLY – be in charge of our lives?
- We want to be the master of our fate – the captain of our destiny
- It's all well and good to give people a voice – or even influence – but it's got to be in our control
- And yet... the Way says differently
- (talk people through the Lord's Supper)