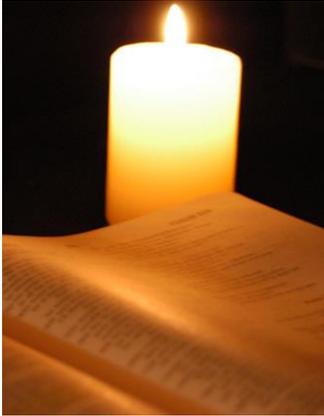


Sermon - April 3, 2016 - Easter 2,

“I Am the Light”

John 8:12 and John 20:19–31



Dear Friends in Christ,

Our meditation this morning is based on two Gospel lessons, the first is the Gospel lesson for this morning, John chapter 20, where we once again hear of Doubting Thomas.

Thomas was a modern man, and for modern men seeing is believing. I don't know how they thought about it in antiquity, but I certainly know that today, when we read the story of "doubting" Thomas, our sympathies lie with him.

The other disciples are spouting a crazy story: "We have seen the Lord." "Yeah, well, he was dead. I saw it." Why in the world should Thomas believe the accounts of a risen Jesus? It didn't make sense. Nobody rises from the dead. But doubting we heard last Easter Sunday means something is either dead or dying in us. We can also say that being in doubt is like being in darkness. A darkness that needs the true light! But the good news is that the True light comes to us. On Easter Sunday we learned that Jesus said, I'm the resurrection, and the Life. The resurrection is not so much an event as it is a Person, the person of Jesus.

Today and the next few Sundays we are going continue meditating on Jesus who said "I Am." I am the resurrection and the life, was our theme last Sunday and today's theme is "I am the Light." And next week we shall hear Jesus saying: "I Am the Vine."

Jesus is our Light! And whoever follows him will not walk in darkness, will not walk in doubt but have the light of life. That's our theme for today.

We read of this truth it in the same Gospel of John, the eighth chapter, Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

This too is good News, good news of the resurrection that Jesus not only is the resurrection and the life but also the light so that in following him we would not walk in darkness, for walking in darkness is scary, isn't it?

All through scripture, you can see the light contrasted with darkness. In the beginning, God spoke and said, "Let there be light." And he separated the darkness from the light, the day from the night.

All through the bible, God is called light. And our spiritual enemy, Satan, is called the Prince of Darkness. In fact, when Jesus told Paul what was his purpose, he contrasted light and darkness. He said: "...I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:17b-18.)

There is good news for Thomas the doubter, as there is good news for each one of us, for those who are walking in darkness, for the True Light has come, died and rouse from the dead. He is the True Light.

Now, when Jesus spoke those words, and stated that He is the Light, he spoke those words after one of the greatest grace-filled stories in the Scriptures. The story of the "The woman caught in adultery" described in John chapter 8.

The story begins with Jesus teaching at the Temple, and as he was teaching, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the people gathered there and told Jesus, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" (John 8:4-5)

It is a true fact, isn't it, that when the Law is at work something happens. The Law is everything God requires of us, but at the same time the Law reveals our guilt, that's what it does.

Here is a woman who was caught in the act of adultery and she is now being displayed in public, the eyes of those gathered there accusing her even more, she was being humiliated beyond description. Without any shadow of a doubt, this is the darkest, most shame filled and humiliating moments of her life as they ask Jesus, "Should we stone her like the law says?"

In the Law of Moses, it is prescribed that if someone was caught in adultery that person must die, must be stoned to death. That's the law. Now here, she is being displayed before the community and she is before Jesus judgment, what was he to do? Well, Jesus is going to do something really significant. He shines light into her life, he gives her a new life, he doesn't condemn her as her sins deserved but shows her grace and love.

Yes she is guilty! She is guilty of the penalty of the law. And here are her accusers, the Pharisees and Scribes. But Jesus doesn't seem to listen to their accusations; instead He kneels down and starts writing something in the dirt with his finger.

Now, what did he write? The answer is: We don't know for sure. But "as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." (Vs. 7-11)

Now why would the accusers leave, and why did older ones leave first? It is because the Law accuses and exposes our guilt. And the accusers, the Pharisees and the scribes were equally guilty before God's eyes; after all we all stand guilty before the Almighty God, because of the wrongs we have done, be it in actions, words or deeds, and the older ones know of course all what they have done, their guilt of course was great.

"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." Jesus said. Jesus the Light, is going after something that's really, really important. These judgmental, arrogant guys, the ones who wanted to stone the adulterous woman, have the same problem that all of us have at one point or another. And this is the problem. It is easy, very easy in fact, to see others' sins but overlook our own sins facing us back in the mirror of our own reality and more importantly in the mirror of God's Law.

Have you noticed that? It's so easy to pick others apart. "Well look at her," and "Look at him." And "I can't believe", and not very easy to notice our own sinfulness.

But the law reveals our guilt. The law said this woman is guilty. The law says we are guilty and keeps us in the darkness of our sins. But the good news is it doesn't stop with the law. The law reveals our guilt. But love reveals God's grace and God's grace brings us to the light of a new life.

This is the second work the Light does it brings about God's Grace.

When all the woman's accusers left, "Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." Now, here is God's grace, Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you."

Broken and shamed, in the darkest moment of her life, she says, "No one, sir." "Neither do I condemn you." Jesus responds.

This is the amazing work of the Light, of the one who was in the darkness of the grave but that now is alive shining light into in the darkest corners of our lives, be it guilt, shame or doubt, He is there to shine on and in us.

Is there any, here today walking in a little bit of shame and agony over what you did, or do you have accusers pointing the accusatory finger at you? Are you feeling guilty today? Maybe, overall walking in darkness? Is there anybody who is walking in doubt of God and even yourself? The Light is for you! The Light brings about God's grace, and tells you that when you are in Christ Jesus, you need to know that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; his grace changes everything. You are not what you did, you are not what they say you are, you are who God says you are. And because of his grace, if you are in Christ, there is no condemnation, and as he invited Thomas, he invites us to come and see, to come and touch him, and believe in the sure confidence of Christ presence here and now.

Now, it is important to know that we do have an accuser; his name is Satan. Revelation 12 calls him "the accuser." And he is continually throwing insults and accusations against you.

It can be as simple as through the voice that tells you: "After what you did, God could never love you." "After how bad you messed up, he could never forgive you." "After all you've done, you could never make a difference in this world." "After what you did, you'll never have a good marriage." "Oh, you blew it big time; it's over." Or could lead you like Thomas to doubt and tell you "God is not real" "Jesus never came back from the dead" "Jesus is just a mythological figure" "religion is just man's invention." That is the voice of the accuser; that's not the voice of the savior. The voice of the savior says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness." The voice of the Savior is inviting us: "Come and see, come and touch," "believe!" But Satan's goal is to keep you in darkness.

But thanks be to God he send his son to earth and then back from the dead, to be the light of the world.

Now, whenever the accuser accuses you of your past, you just remind him of his future. "You're going down." Darkness never defeats light. You have been destroyed at the cross and defeated at Jesus resurrection.

Remember that you have been forgiven, and remember that you too were told "neither I condemn you!"

Was the adulterous woman guilty? Yes she was. Are you guilty? Yes you were, yes you are! Do we deserve punishment? Yes we do! But it was because of his love that the grace was revealed, and now His light shines on us.

There is one thing that we can see in the story of the adulterous woman, and also Thomas. Jesus relationship with each one is personal. When Jesus looked at the adulterous woman, he said, "Neither I condemn you" at that moment, he was no longer the light of the world. He actually became the light of her world.

When Thomas didn't believe Jesus came back to life, was showing something dead in him, he was showing his skepticism, the life philosophy of this world. But Jesus didn't condemn his doubt, instead invited him "to touch and see" him. "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." At that moment Jesus become also the light of Thomas' world.

Today Jesus wants to be the Light of our world, not only of the World but of each our worlds. Here he invites us to receive His grace, his forgiveness and we do have the direct invitation to come and "taste" him, to come and touch him, to come and see him in the gifts of His body and blood.

We do have the invitation to walk in the light, in the light of the risen Christ.
In His name, amen.