

Light

Third Series – Sermon Thirty-Two

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The Gospel is the declaration of what is true. This declaration is not presented primarily in words and concepts, but in the life and actions of one Man, Jesus Christ! It is not a proposition or possibility based on various and differing transactions built on definitions, legal concepts, and theories. Rather, it is showing God's children, through the face of the Son, the Divine heart and will of the Father.

There is no making what is true, true by anything we can say or do, but by the accepting and receiving of what is already true in the finished work of Christ. And this is the gospel we declare to you. The One who was eternally face-to-face with the Father has now become one with us! What a relationship we have been given in Them!

We saw him with our very own eyes.

We gazed upon him and heard him speak.

*Our hands actually touched him,
the one who was from the beginning,
the Living Expression of God.*

*This Life-Giver was made visible
and we have seen him.*

*We testify to this truth:
the eternal Life-Giver
lived face-to-face with the Father
and has now dawned upon us.*

*So we proclaim to you
what we have seen and heard
about this Life-Giver
so that we may share and enjoy
this life together.*

*For truly our fellowship is with the Father
and with his Son, Jesus, the Anointed One.*

We are writing these things to you because we want to release to you our fullness of joy.

This is the life-giving message we heard him share and it's still ringing in our ears. We now repeat his words to you: God is pure light. You will never find even a trace of darkness in him. (1 John 1:1-5 Passion)

“God is Light.” This Light is the Truth of the Gospel, and it bears the fruit of Joy! This joy is the fruit of justice found in the Life of the Son. Repent, change your mind and heart, turn away from theories and systems of thought, and believe and trust in this face-to-face relationship alone!

Outline

The Gospel - The Gospel is the declaration of what is true. This declaration is not presented primarily in words and concepts, but in the Life and actions of one Man, Jesus Christ!

Light and Darkness - God is light and it is the goodness seen in the face and life of Jesus.

Beauty of God's Light - There is nothing but goodness and loveliness in light. For in the Divine Being, there is only beauty!

Repent, Come into the Light - Light is not about being legally right but relationally right!

Light and Systems - Light is not a system of thought, or a way of thinking, but the very nature of the Divine itself.

Forgiveness and Darkness - So, in essence, God is saying, I forgive you everything. Not a word more shall be said about your sins, only come out of them.

Punishment and Forgiveness - Both punishment and forgiveness are about becoming what we are as children of light. Living in the light and life of God is not living in some covering or imputed righteousness, but about the relentless love of God for our freedom in true righteousness!

1 John 1:5 NAS

“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

John 3:19 NAS

“And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil.”

The Gospel

We call the story of Jesus the Gospel, the Good News, told differently yet consistently by four different narrators. So, what makes this tale good news? Is everything in the story of Christ's life on earth good news? Is it good news that the only good man was treated by His fellow men as Jesus was by being cast out of this world in torture and shame? Is it good news that He came to His creation and they did not receive Him? So, what part, I repeat, makes the tale good news?

If we ask the theologians, and if they were true men and answered from their heart and not from the traditions of men, “What do you understand in the tale that makes it good news to you? Even though it might contain things that might be anything but good news to some of us.” The salvation they present to many of us is founded on ideas of God that contain as little good as it is news.

Participation in the salvation that some present as the gospel varies greatly. All ideas do not stick to the tale itself, but are filled with deductions from the epistles and their own concepts of evil. We would have to believe things about God from these systems that would be the opposite of good news to us! Even a gospel from hell itself. We would have to imagine and accept things worse than what the "good news" was intended to deliver. First, we must believe in an unjust God from whom we must seek refuge. True, they call Him *just* but assert He does things that are the essence of injustice to me. They reprove me as judging after the flesh. However, is it then to the flesh the Lord appeals when He says, *“Why can't you decide for yourselves what is right?”* Is Jesus not the light that illuminates every man who comes into the world?

They tell me I was born into a world of sin; this I know is true. Because of this sin, they tell me I am judged as and with the same severity as if I had been born into righteousness. And this judgment I know is false. They say it is the consequence of the holiness and justice of God. That He judges us, who were born into evil, of which we are not accountable and had no choice concerning our sinfulness, instead of our actions and guilt. They tell me or at least imply that every wrong I have done subjects me to the same judgment. As if I was aware of my purity and chose evil as an act of free will. A conscious choice instead of not recognizing the choice as evil or recognizing it only in the vaguest way.

Is there any good news in telling me my God is unjust! And then tell me there is a way of deliverance "from" Him? Convince me my God is unjust, and you awaken in me a damnation from which there is no deliverance, least of all from this god! This concept may be good news to those content to have a god capable of unrighteousness if He is only on their side!

Who would not rejoice to hear a summary from Matthew, Mark, or Luke of what is meant by the gospel? Or better yet, what is in the story of Jesus that made Him call it good news! Each could probably give us a slightly different but consistent answer containing the seed of their reasoning. However, in John, we have Jesus' direct answer to the question. In one sentence, John records not the gospel according to John, but the gospel according to Jesus Christ Himself.

John told us the story of Jesus, the good news of who He was, what He did and said, and what he saw as the essence of the good news. And in this declaration, he takes us to the very heart of the message. The news Jesus brought concerning His Father and gave to his disciples as the message to deliver to humanity. Through the gospel narratives, Jesus is telling us about the goodness of His Father, but here, in this summary, **John tells us exactly what he heard from the Word himself. He has received it in no systematic form, but from the life that is Life and the man who is Man. The Word that is the Lord and the gospel itself. The good news is not gathering men's proof-texts from Sunday's sermons but spoken by The Word Himself. Not from our various interpretations, but the Word understood through the lamp of their obedience. Those who are willing to do the will of the Father will know the truth of Jesus. The Spirit is "given to those that obey him."**

Light and Darkness

"This is the message we heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1: 5 NAS) Hear my heart and soul. This message is indeed good news for me! This news is the Gospel! If God is Light, what more, what else, could I seek but you, God Himself! Away with your doctrines! Away with your salvation from the "justice" of a god of whom your doctrines make a horror to imagine! Away with your iron cages, traps, of lying philosophies! I am saved, for God is light!

My God and Father, I come to you that you will be enough for my endless needs in time and eternity. Whatever seems to me as darkness in you, I will not believe. If I mistake and call light darkness, you will reveal and bring clarity to me by setting it in the light that lights everyone. Showing me that I saw but the husk of the thing, not its kernel. You will break open the shell for me and let its truth out, Your thoughts streaming out to me.

God will not let my mistake of seeing the light as darkness hurt me, while I reject darkness for light. The first comes from the blindness of the intellect, the other from the blindness of heart and will. I love the light and will not believe in the word or conviction of anyone, which seems to me like there is darkness in God.

Where would the good news be if John had said, God is light, but you cannot see it? If you have no concept of light, then you cannot realize or understand what God means by it. Or, what God calls light is seen by you as horrible darkness because you are of another nature than Him. Where would be the good news in that?

The light of God may indeed be so bright that we see nothing, but that light is not darkness. It is an infinite light of hope. It is also true that "the day of the Lord" is about darkness, not light for the wicked. But that is because the wicked judge good and evil oppositely from good people. When the wicked say, "Evil, be thou my good," evil to them means what God does and good is only pleasure. You cannot exchange their meanings. Calling darkness according to us to be light in God's eyes is blasphemy. To say that light in God and man are different is to lie against light's spirit.

God is light far beyond what we can see, but what we mean by light, God means by light as well. And what is light to God is light to us, or will be light to us if and when we see it. God wants us to be joyful in the fact that He is light, for being joyful is what He means by light for His children, made in His

image. What seems dark to us may be but the excellent glory of too much joy that we do not yet have the eyes, souls, and hearts to take in at the moment.

Beauty of God's Light

The fear of the light comes from a lie and darkness is to believe that lie. No one needs to fear the light of God for themselves or another. Light is in beautiful harmony with our nature, and there is nothing harmful in it. All dread and fear of the light comes from the darkness still in us where we do not see and love the truth. These feelings will leave as we are filled with more and more light.

The beauty of light simply means there is no thought or action that we think is admirable in anyone in which God is not altogether its inspiring source! There is no loveliness, nothing that endears us to others, not in God, and infinitely better in Him. He is the Father of our savior, as Jesus is our savior because of His Father. They are the source of all comfort and consolation. They will soothe and satisfy Their children better than any mother will her infant.

The only thing They will not give us is permission to stay in the dark. If God's child cries, "I want the darkness," and then complains that They will not give him what he wants, that is because They give what Their child needs, often by refusing to provide them with what they ask. If they say, "I will not be good. I prefer to die. Let me die!" They will respond as if to say, "No, We have the right to bless with what is good and not giving you your will but ours. You will not die, but live to thank me that I did not answer your prayers. You know about what you ask for, but nothing about which you refuse."

There are good things God must delay until we are ready for them, have a pocket for them. They must first make us ready to receive and have what God wishes to give us before they can help us make that pocket. No part of our nature will go unsatisfied, but not by making us less, but more by embracing an ever-enlarging Life.

Come to God, my brothers and sisters, with all your desires and instincts and all your lofty ideals. Bring all your longings for purity and unselfishness. Bring your desires to be loving and faithful and all your aspirations that are after other-centeredness and childlikeness. Bring them into the breath and life of the Father. Come to Him with all your weaknesses, shame, fruitlessness, and helplessness to control your thoughts. Bring all your failures, yes, even your discouragement and misguided desires. Come to Him with your doubts, fears, dishonesty, meanness, smallness, misjudgments, weariness, and disappointments. Know that They will receive you and all humanity, along with the dirty-winged angels or the deceiving snakes, into Their care. Taking the angels into life, the snakes into death, and humanity into the limitless liberty of Their infinite heart! For He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

If God acted like a king or a governor and the name that described Him was The Almighty, then you would have reason enough to doubt that there is light enough in Him for your darkness. But He lives as your Father, my God, and your God. Such a Father is infinite and perfect light. If He were any less or any other than Father, He would not be endless goodness, and you would eventually be dissatisfied with Him. But He is light.

If anything seems in Them not enough, be confident that your love for God and others will mature into a full appreciation of their infinite Life. Do not be afraid to build upon Christ the rock. You cannot imagine anything that the rock cannot sustain.

Let no one persuade you that there is even a little darkness because of something He has said or assigned to Him that we creatures interpret as darkness. This interpretation is the enemy's work, a handful of weeds of darkness sown into the fields of light. And neither let your cowardly insecurity receive any word as light because another calls it light while it looks like darkness to you. Respond with "either the thing in question is not what it seems," or "They never said or did it." Of all evils, do not misinterpret what God does and assume the misinterpretation must be right because God does it. This misinterpretation, too, is of the evil one.

Do not try and believe anything that strikes you as darkness even if you make a mistake and resist something true. You will do less harm in your refusal than in accepting something that seems like darkness. So, let your words be few in your doubt, in order that you do not have to repent in your heart later for something you should not have said. Above all things, believe in the light as you see it.

Repent, Come into the Light

There is a shadow side to this light. God is light indeed, but there is darkness. Darkness is death even as light is Life, and people are in darkness. Yes, darkness is death, but not death to those who reject it!

It may seem a paradox, but no one is condemned for anything they have done. They are condemned for continuing to do wrong and not coming out of the darkness, not coming into the light. Children who are not coming to the living God who sent the Light, His Son, into the world to guide them home. Let us consider what John says about darkness.

No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." (John 3: 13-19 NAS)

Here we begin with John's words. It is not we that ascend but the Light that descends. In verse nineteen, he says, "And this is the judgment," not that men are sinners, that committed murder, betrayed others, mistreated the poor, not for any of the horrible things they have done are they condemned. They are condemned because they will not leave them behind and do them no more. "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."

They choose and cling to evil, loving the darkness because it is in harmony with their deeds. Therefore, they turn their backs on the breaking light. How else could they be judged! If God is truth

and light, then darkness is alien to Him! Whatever is honest in us and judgment in the world must allow them to reap what they have sown.

Light and Systems

If you speak a truth that another person has made a gear in their system of thought then you are in danger of being seen as in agreement with all the gears in their system. But that is not true. Just because light came into the world does not mean it has fallen on any one person. He may have his portion of the light that enlightens everyone. However, the revelation of God in Christ may not have reached him entirely. A person like Nathanael might have started and stopped at the mere glimpse of Him, but all maturing people are not yet like him without deceit.

Everyone who has not yet come to the light is not necessarily keeping his face turned away from it. We cannot say that this or that person would not come to the light had they seen it. We do not know whether they will come to the light the moment they see it. God gives everyone time. There is a light that enlightens both sage and savage, but the glory of God in the face of Jesus may not have reached them yet. Not shined on this sage or savage.

The judgment is to those who, having seen Jesus, refuse to come to Him. Or they come to Him but refuse to obey and follow Him. They have all sorts of excuses ready. But, as soon as the excuses come, the time has come as well to obey. How many believe there is a claim on them from the light. But who go on more and more in the darkness! This awareness, neglected by them, gives good support for the complaint of the Lord, "*and yet you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life!*"

Forgiveness and Darkness

"All manner of sin and blasphemy," the Lord said, *"shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven."* **So, in essence, God is saying, I forgive you everything. Not a word more shall be said about your sins, only come out of them. You must come out of the darkness of your exile and go into the light of your home, of your birthright, and do evil no more. That is to lie, cheat, oppress, slander, envy, greedy or vain. You are to love your neighbor as I love you, be my good child, and trust in your Father. I am the light. When you come to me, you will see things as I see them and hate evil. I will free you to love what you now call good but do not love. And I will forgive all your past sins!**

Thank you, Lord, for forgiving me, but no thanks. I prefer staying in the darkness. Will you forgive me that too?

No, that will never happen. **The one thing that cannot be forgiven is the sin of choosing to remain evil, of refusing deliverance. It is impossible to dismiss that choice. It would be for God to participate in it with you. God would have to take sides with the sin against what is right; with murder against life, this sin cannot be forgiven. The past things are past, but those who keep doing the same things destroys my forgiveness and make it ineffective.**

Let a person commit any sin, and I will forgive them. However, how can I forgive them if you go on sinning? It would be to feed and support evil! It would be to let my creation go to ruin. Shall I keep you alive to do hateful things in the eyes of good people? If you refuse to come out of your sin, you must

suffer the punishment of a love that would not be love if it left you there. Can I permit my creatures to be what my soul hates?

There is no excuse for this refusal. If God punished us for every fault, there would be no end, no rest wherein to repent. God passes what He can, thousands of sins forgiving them all, but only we must begin to be good.

Those who refuse must be punished through the ages to come until they yield and come to the light. Not until they see their sins as they are and are delivered, will the Father, at last, have His child again. Perhaps, the person in this world who resists to the end may have an age in which their sin remains unforgiven until they repent. How can those who will not repent be forgiven, except that God does what He can to bring them to repentance? Who knows, but such sin and unrepentance may need a treatment of continuous punishment for an eon?

Punishment and Forgiveness

There are three types of punishments with their outcomes. First, there is mere retribution, which I take to be entirely human in origin and see as inhuman. Inhuman because what is not divine is not essentially human and is evil, an invader in God's creature. Secondly, a punishment that works towards repentance, and thirdly, one that refines and purifies, working towards wholeness and purity. Therefore, there are two expressions of this punishment based on the need. First, there is the punishment of the beloved who have repented and need refinement. Second, there is punishment for the beloved He cannot forgive because they hold on to their sin.

There are also various ways in which the word forgive can be used. A father might say to his son, "I forgive you. You did not know what you were doing. I will say no more about it." Or he might say, "My boy, I forgive you, but I must punish you, for you have done this several times, and I need to help you change." Or, again, "I am seriously angry with you. I cannot forgive you. I must punish you severely. This action is too shameful and cannot be passed by." Or finally with no change, "Except you change your ways entirely, I will not continue to support you. You need not return as you are. I will not take responsibility for anything you do. Also, I feel bound by honesty to warn my friends to put no confidence in you. Not until I see a significant change in you will I dare to forgive you in this world. I cannot any longer consider you as one of the family. I would die for you, but I cannot forgive you.

There is nothing left on which to base my forgiveness. To say I forgive you is to concede, do anything you want. I do not care what you do. So, God may forgive and punish, and He may punish and not forgive, that He may rescue you.

To forgive the sin against the Holy Spirit would be to damn the universe to live a lie and render it impossible for one so forgiven to ever come to the light. Therefore, God cannot forgive us for our unrepentant sin. Against this defiant one, His Fatherly heart is moved with displeasure.

CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

The Gospel

To share in the deliverance which some men find in what they call the gospel—for all do not apply the word to the tale itself, but to certain deductions made from the epistles and their own consciousness of evil—we should have to believe such things of God as would be the opposite of an evangel to us—yea, a message from hell itself; we should have to imagine that whose possibility would be worse than any ill from which their 'good news' might offer us deliverance: we must first believe in an unjust God, from whom we have to seek refuge. True, they call him just, but say he does that which seems to the best in me the essence of injustice.

They tell me I was born in sin, and I know it to be true; they tell me also that I am judged with the same severity as if I had been born in righteousness, and that I know to be false. They make it a consequence of the purity and justice of God that he will judge us, born in evil, for which birth we were not accountable, by our sinfulness, instead of by our guilt. They tell me, or at least give me to understand, that every wrong thing I have done makes me subject to be treated as if I had done that thing with the free will of one who had in him no taint of evil—when, perhaps, I did not at the time recognize the thing as evil, or recognized it only in the vaguest fashion.

Is there any gospel in telling me that God is unjust, but that there is a way of deliverance from him?

John tells us what he himself has heard from The Word—what in sum he has gathered from Jesus as the message he has to declare. He has received it in no systematic form; it is what a life, the life, what a man, the man, has taught him. The Word is the Lord; the Lord is the gospel. The good news is no fagot of sticks of a man's gathering on the Sabbath. Every man must read the Word for himself. One may read it in one shape, another in another: all will be right if it be indeed the Word they read, and they read it by the lamp of obedience. He who is willing to do the will of the Father shall know the truth of the teaching of Jesus. The spirit is 'given to them that obey him.'

Light and Darkness

'This then is the message,' he says, 'which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' Ah, my heart, this is indeed the good news for thee! This is a gospel! If God be light, what more, what else can I seek than God, than God himself! Away with your doctrines! Away with your salvation from the 'justice' of a God whom it is a horror to imagine! Away with your iron cages of false metaphysics! I am saved—for God is light!

God is light far beyond what we can see, but what we mean by light, God means by light; and what is light to God is light to us, or would be light to us if we saw it, and will be light to us when we do see it. God means us to be jubilant in the fact that he is light—that he is what his children, made in his image, mean when they say light; that what in him is dark to them, is dark by excellent glory, by too much cause of jubilation; that, however dark it may be to their eyes, it is light even as they mean it, light for their eyes and souls and hearts to take in the moment they are enough of eyes, enough of souls, enough of hearts, to receive it in its very being.

Beauty of God's Light

In a word, there is no way of thought or action which we count admirable in man, in which God is not altogether adorable. There is no loveliness, nothing that makes man dear to his brother man, that is not in God, only it is infinitely better in God.

There are good things God must delay giving until his child has a pocket to hold them—till he gets his child to make that pocket. He must first make him fit to receive and to have. There is no part of our nature that shall not be satisfied—and that not by lessening it, but by enlarging it to embrace an ever-enlarging enough.

Come to God, then, my brother, my sister, with all thy desires and instincts, all thy lofty ideals, all thy longing for purity and unselfishness, all thy yearning to love and be true, all thy aspiration after self-forgetfulness and child-life in the breath of the Father; come to him with all thy weaknesses, all thy shames, all thy futilities; with all thy helplessness over thy own thoughts; with all thy failure, yea, with the sick sense of having missed the tide of true affairs; come to him with all thy doubts, fears, dishonesties, meannesses, paltrinesses, misjudgments, wearinesses, disappointments, and stalenesses: be sure he will take thee and all thy miserable brood, whether of draggle-winged angels, or covert-seeking snakes, into his care, the angels for life, the snakes for death, and thee for liberty in his limitless heart! For he is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Repent, Come into the Light

'But there is another side to the matter: God is light indeed, but there is darkness; darkness is death, and men are in it.'

Yes; darkness is death, but not death to him that comes out of it.

It may sound paradoxical, but no man is condemned for anything he has done; he is condemned for continuing to do wrong. He is condemned for not coming out of the darkness, for not coming to the light, the living God, who sent the light, his son, into the world to guide him home. Let us hear what John says about the darkness.

For here also we have, I think, the word of the apostle himself: at the 13th verse he begins, I think, to speak in his own person. In the 19th verse he says, 'And this is the condemnation,'—not that men are sinners—not that they have done that which, even at the moment, they were ashamed of—not that they have committed murder, not that they have betrayed man or woman, not that they have ground the faces of the poor, making money by the groans of their fellows—not for any hideous thing are they condemned, but that they will not leave such doings behind, and do them no more: 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men' would not come out of the darkness to the light, but 'loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

Choosing evil, clinging to evil, loving the darkness because it suits with their deeds, therefore turning their backs on the inbreaking light, how can they but be condemned—if God be true, if he be light, and darkness be alien to him! Whatever of honesty is in man, whatever of judgment is left in the world, must allow that their condemnation is in the very nature of things, that it must rest on them and abide.

Light and Systems

The condemnation is of those who, having seen Jesus, refuse to come to him, or pretend to come to him but do not the things he says. They have all sorts of excuses at hand; but as soon as a man begins to make excuse, the time has come when he might be doing that from which he excuses himself. How many are there not who, believing there is something somewhere with the claim of light upon them, go on and on to get more out of the darkness! This consciousness, all neglected by them, gives broad ground for the expostulation of the Lord—'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life!'

Forgiveness and Darkness

God speaks, as it were, in this manner: 'I forgive you everything. Not a word more shall be said about your sins—only come out of them; come out of the darkness of your exile; come into the light of your home, of your birthright, and do evil no more. Lie no more; cheat no more; oppress no more; slander no more; envy no more; be neither greedy nor vain; love your neighbour as I love you; be my good child; trust in your father. I am light; come to me, and you shall see things as I see them, and hate the evil thing. I will make you love the thing which now you call good and love not. I forgive all the past.'

The one thing that cannot be forgiven is the sin of choosing to be evil, of refusing deliverance. It is impossible to forgive that sin. It would be to take part in it. To side with wrong against right, with murder against life, cannot be forgiven. The thing that is past I pass, but he who goes on doing the same, annihilates this my forgiveness, makes it of no effect.

He who refuses must be punished and punished—punished through all the ages—punished until he gives way, yields, and comes to the light, that his deeds may be seen by himself to be what they are, and be by himself reprov'd, and the Father at last have his child again.

Punishment and Forgiveness

There is nothing in you now on which to rest forgiveness. To say, I forgive you, would be to say, Do anything you like; I do not care what you do.' So God may forgive and punish; and he may punish and not forgive, that he may rescue.