

Livin' the Life
The Light Is Divisive, part 10
John 3:19-21
December 31, 2017

We are back in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life, with today's message, the Light is Divisive from 3:19-21. Jesus is teaching and performing miracles or signs with some believing and others not, creating a division in humanity. Coming to this passage we see why Jesus is divisive.

Let's briefly review last week. God's love is great because he loves rebels and traitors. Second, God's love is great because it was at the great sacrifice of his Son. And last, God's love is great because it is the free offer of salvation to whoever believes. Then verse seventeen and eighteen are a bridge to today's text, 19-21. Here he explains the giving of his Son as sending his Son not to condemn the world but to save the world through the Son (17). The Son's mission is a rescue mission. Then in verse eighteen he still says the same thing but changes the language and this is where we will pick up with today's message.

Those who Reject Jesus are Guilty for their Unbelief

He¹ draws a conclusion, changing the vocabulary from the language of life, perishing and eternal life, to the language of guilt, not condemned and condemned already (18). He divides humanity, whoever believes is not condemned, not guilty, and whoever does not believe is condemned, guilty, already. The reason Jesus did not come to condemn or judge the world (condemn is just a negative judgement) is that it stands condemned or guilty already. Each one of us stands before God divided, guilty and perishing or not guilty and having eternal life based upon whether we believe in Jesus or not. You may think that sounds harsh and unloving. But God's love is not a sentimental love or the love of a spurned lover who is hurt and offended. This is the love of the Creator toward his creatures who are traitors yet still depend upon him and owe him love and allegiance.

Then in verse nineteen he describes this division again and changes the vocabulary again, from believe and not believe to love and hate; come and not come. "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed (19-20)." He describes Jesus as light. I think there are a couple of reasons. As the light, he perfectly reflects the Father (1:18) who is also called the light (1 Jn 1:5). Jesus is the sum of all truth and wisdom (14:6; Col 2:3). Jesus is also the sum of all moral beauty (1 Jn 1:5). If you want to know truth, get to know Jesus. If you want to be like Jesus, follow Jesus. Now he wants us to see why this judgement comes with Jesus and why some believe and some don't. Jesus has come and people are repelled by him because they love the darkness rather than the light because their works, the way they think, feel, and do, were evil. We all have a love affair with darkness and so we hate the infinite worth of the light. That is what evil is, rejecting Jesus, being indifferent to his infinite worth and great love. We do evil because our hearts are evil, what we think, what we desire, and what we do, is evil. There are no good people who make bad choices, only evil people who make evil choices. Those who do evil hate the light and so run from the light. Sin is repelled by the light. Sin is so ugly and so monstrous and so hideous that it must surround itself with darkness. They do not come to the light because they do not want their evil exposed. This does not mean they never sin in public. We see this every day when there is enough support for darkness, when others admire darkness, sin is paraded around proudly.

So this is the judgment, when the light comes we all naturally are repelled, we are indifferent because we love the darkness which has so tainted us that we do not see the beauty and truth and goodness of the light and so reject Jesus. We do not come to the light because we do not want to come. And that sin and unbelief makes us guilty before God. He is describing the kind of judgment that really does happen when light comes into the world. Those who are condemned in this judgment

¹ It is uncertain whether these are the words of Jesus or John at this point.

are condemned by what they love and hate. And we will see that those who are rescued from this judgment are rescued by God's grace.

Those who Come to Jesus are Graced with Faith

Now we see the contrasting side to this judgment, this divide in humanity and the intervention of God in those who believe. "But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God (21)." Whoever does what is true, described as coming to the light, with a purpose in mind, so that, it is clearly seen that their works, doing what is true, is the work of God and not their own. I do not think he is just talking about coming to faith but the life of faith. I say this because the faith that saves us also sustains us. The ultimate contrast between those who believe and those who do not is the grace of God. All of their life, coming to the light, doing what is true and right is ultimately the work of God and not themselves. That is, they come with a deep humility that every good thing they think, feel, and do is the by God's power and not their own of God.

This is the judgement. Jesus is divisive. One hand, those who reject Jesus because they love the darkness and hates the light are guilty. But those who come to Jesus because of God's grace. Or put simply, unbelief is our fault/guilt but belief is God's grace/gift.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Why is God's love so great?
2. How is God's love for the world different than his love for his children?
3. Does God love all people equally?
4. What does it mean to believe?
5. Why is Jesus described as light?
6. Why does all humanity love the darkness and the light?
7. What do you think about yourself being evil? How do you feel about it?
8. Why are all humanity guilty before God?
9. If we are all equally sinful, what does these verses tell us why some believe and others don't?
10. What does verse 21 mean?

