

Daily Discipleship

Fourth Sunday in Lent (B) – John 3:14-21

The Path of Discipleship: *Within the Light*

Focus Question: *What does it mean to walk in the light of Christ?*

word of life

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. John 3:21 (NRSV)

Read John 3:14-21

The third chapter of John begins with the story of Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews who comes to Jesus at night to ask questions. The assigned verses are part of the answer by Jesus to the questions raised by Nicodemus. Jesus is challenging Nicodemus to grow in his faith. (To understand the context of these verses read John 3:1-13.)

Jesus draws upon Nicodemus' knowledge of Scripture by referring to Moses. Jesus uses the image of Moses lifting up the bronze serpent for the healing of the people (Numbers 21:4-9), but gives new meaning to it by expanding this image to include the Son of Man being lifted up in crucifixion and resurrection. *Belief* is critical. Healing occurs as new life is given.

1. *How does Jesus offer healing through eternal life?*

John 3:16 is a well-known verse emphasizing God's love, a love revealed through the sacrifice of God's own Son so everyone might have eternal life. This love is a gift for all people.

2. *What does John 3:16 mean for you?*

God desires for the whole world to be saved and not be condemned; yet John's Gospel asserts that not everyone desires God's salvation. Believing in God is critical.

3. *Why do some resist the goodness of God?*

4. *Why do some have difficulty trusting and believing in God?*

Jesus returns to the theme of darkness and light as it relates to Nicodemus coming in a dark night to seek Jesus. Light exposes sin and secrecy. It's hard to hide when light comes into a room or life. Jesus puts it this way, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

5. *What does it mean to "love darkness"?*

Jesus speaks about people coming to the light and to God's love. Obviously, when a pathway is lit, traveling becomes much easier. Dangers are exposed. The same is true in our faith walk. Staying close to the light of Christ helps a person walk in the path of discipleship, following the teachings of Jesus.

The goal is to live in the light of Christ. Then, deeds are done in God and for God's pleasure. Hopefully, those actions invite others to come to the light.

6. *Describe possible responses from Nicodemus to the words of Jesus.*

word among us

The counselor at a summer church camp was to coordinate Night Camp, a new program in which campers would sleep during the day, eat their breakfast at 6:00 pm, do a variety of activities throughout the night, eat lunch at midnight, and have supper at 7:00 am. The campers would explore nocturnal life, hike the woods at night, call owls, and reverse their typical daily schedule.

In preparation for the week, the camp counselor began looking for a key theme verse in the Bible on darkness. Not much was found. Consistently, the Bible affirms living in the light of Christ. It is one thing to voluntarily spend a week wandering in the woods at night, but living outside the light of Christ is not recommended for every day living.

1. *What good can be said about wandering in the dark?*
2. *Why do people “love darkness”?*
3. *Describe a situation in which you longed for light.*

God’s love is intended for all people. Jesus was sent to save the whole world. John 3:16 is a powerful reminder of God’s immense love. This passage is a favorite for people to hold up at sporting events. Many times a television camera will focus on a sign with just these words, “John 3:16.”

4. *What do you think the person holding the sign is trying to convey?*
5. *What might be a more effective way to share God’s love?*

Not all the world wants to live in the light of Christ. Sometimes there is resistance. It is helpful to be aware of this from the start. Otherwise, it can be discouraging to share faith with someone, only to meet resistance and rejection.

6. *Recall a time when you tried to share the love and light of Christ only to be rejected.*
7. *What do you advise someone who experiences rejection because he or she tried to share the love of Christ?*

When you consider your own life as a disciple of Christ, think about what it means to walk within the light of Christ. Ponder things that have helped you stay within the light of Christ.

8. *Share the story of someone who models walking in the light of Christ.*
9. *What are daily patterns of living which are helpful to disciples of Jesus who want to walk in his light?*

Prayer

Help me to walk in the light of Christ. Guide my choices to reflect your love. Amen

Dig Deeper

John 1:1-5

last word

Find a candle and light it during your daily devotions.



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