**St Martins C3 – December 4, 2022**

**Light, Life, Love – The Light of the world**

**Sermon Summary:**

Typically, we expect lots of talk about shepherds, angels and wise men in messages leading up to Christmas, however, the gospel writers don’t focus on the historical details, but the truth of Jesus’ identity. In particular, the book of John focuses on three key questions: Who is Jesus? Why does He matter? Will you trust your life to Him? John frames these three questions around three key words that Jesus uses to describe Himself and our response to Him. Those three words are light, life and love. Today we are going to explore the word “light” in John’s gospel.

**John 8:12**

*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

**John 3:19-21**

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.*

What Jesus means by being the “light of the world,” is that in Him the truth about who God is has been made known. In the person of Jesus we have the clearest revelation of God that we will ever receive. (Jn 14:9, Col 1:19 and Luke 2:10-11)

**Who is Jesus? – Jesus is God.** Christmas celebrations ought to highlight the most important truth we need to know. God has come among us in the person of Jesus. The point of celebrating Christmas is to remind us that our God is real and is present in human history and still present through His Holy Spirit. How much do we appreciate and how much are we aware of God’s presence in our lives, at the moment?

**Why does He matter? – Our response to the truth of who Jesus is shapes the type of person we will become.** When God revealed the truth of who He was, some responded with delight, as it was just what they were looking for and some retreated further into their deception. Jesus was very clear on the fact that not everyone will accept the truth of who He is. The reason for their acceptance or rejection is not based on the quality of what God presents to us, it based on the condition of our hearts. Accept the truth and we will become whole. Reject the truth and we will live in deception, with the consequence of an absence of God’s life in us.

**Will you trust your life to Him?** God empowers truth seekers, so that more truth will be revealed to them. (Jn 16:13) Are we moving towards the truth and who God is? Are we seeking God for more clarity as to what He is revealing and why?

***Are you brave enough to seek out the truth of who Jesus is?***

***What are you hiding that you need to bring into the light?***

* + *What is hiding that sin doing to you?*

***What could you bring before God to seek His truth on?***

**Suggested questions to discuss or ponder on:**

*What did Jesus mean when He said He was the light of the world?*

*According to John 3:19-21, why do some people accept the truth about who Jesus is and other people reject that truth?*

*What changes in our hearts when we accept or reject what is true?*

*What did Jesus mean in John 16:13, when He said that the Spirit will lead us into all truth?*

*What areas of your life do you find it easy to be truthful about before God and what areas do you try to hide from Him?*

*What might be needs or issues in your life that you could seek God’s wisdom on at the moment?*

**Monday’s Devotion – Full of truth**

**John 1:14***The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

This week we are going to explore what John says about truth in his gospel. John describes Jesus as the one who is full of grace and truth. There are a couple of things that John means by this:

1. **Revealing what is true is part of Christ’s identity.**

Jesus knows all things and reveals all things, because He is God and it is the nature of God to know and reveal what is true. What John is reminding us of here, is the fact that Jesus is God. Revealing what is true is in Christ’s nature, therefore He can’t do otherwise. We can seek out the truth from Christ, because He knows all that we need to know and will never lie to us.

1. **Godly truth brings the appropriate balance to Godly grace.**

We need Godly truth. It exposes error and brings necessary correction. It leads us into the life God wants for us. However, truth is hard to receive when delivered without grace. Jesus perfectly balances both, so that we receive the truth we need in the context of the complete love that He has for us.

Take a moment now and ponder on how life-giving the truth that Jesus brings is. Then ponder on the fact that He will help us internalise that truth because he will match the appropriate amount of grace to accompany that truth.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Who He TRULY is.**

**John 4:23**

*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.*

I have read of many different interpretations of this passage. Therefore, I am not seeking to bring out every detail of it here. Rather I wish to focus on two things in particular.

Firstly, the context of this passage is Jesus talking to a woman in Samaria who was describing her culture’s traditional understanding of God and appropriate worship. Jesus explains to her that her traditional understanding about worship is partly true, but not the whole truth. Jesus then explains what appropriate worship of God will look like in the future, now that the true Messiah is here. This highlights to us that how we worship God does matter. Worship isn’t about the place where we are, or the songs we are singing. True worship is about a heartful relational connection to God.

Secondly, we ought to worship God for who He truly is, not who we want Him to be. The Holy Spirit who is leading us in worship, will lead us into a revelation or who God truly is, because the Spirit leads us into all truth (Jn 16:13) God isn’t an idol or something made up by us to feel better about ourselves. God has revealed that He is the Holy One. The creator and sustainer of life.

There ought to be no fantasy or wishful thinking in Christian worship. Godly worshippers are worshipping truthfully, so that God can shape their hearts and minds as they worship Him.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Which side are you on?**

**John 8:44***You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

The context of this passage is a debate that Jesus is having with religious leaders. They had been presented with the truth of who Jesus was on many occasions and at every occasion they had rejected the truth of who Jesus was. Jesus knew this was his last opportunity to convince them who He was, so He takes a very confrontational approach. Jesus explains to them that in them refusing to believe what is true they are siding with Satan rather than with God. Satan only speaks lies, because it is his nature to do so. However, we need to see that when we believe a lie we are always siding with Satan and not with God. When we do that, we live in deception. The more we live in that place of deception the more convinced we become that the lies we are believing are actually true, when they are not.

One of the insights we gain from Jesus here is just how destructive lying to ourselves is. Believing things about God, ourselves or others that are not true leads our hearts away from God. It distorts our thinking, and gives permission for Satan to have influence over us. As Christ followers we have to be pursuers of truth, because it is truth that leads us towards Christ and it’s lies that partner us with Satan. Let us allow Christ to expose the lies we are believing and lead us into all that is true about Him, ourselves and how relate to those around us.

**Thursday’s Devotion – Freedom.**

**John 8:32***Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*

Can you think of a time recently when you were struggling to know what to do, or you were second-guessing yourself? Consider how much extra energy that required of you. The reason for this is God created our spirit and mind to be free from things like anxiety, guilt and insecurity. Unfortunately we live in a world that will dump all those things on us, if we let it.

One of the insights Jesus is giving us here is the effect that truth will have on our lives. Rather than our lives being dominated by fear and stress, it will be filled with joy and freedom. So, how do we live in that freedom? We put our trust in what God says is true, rather than believing in the lies that are swirling around us.

One area of people’s lives where this becomes quite obvious is in the area of our identity. What I mean by that is how we think of ourselves. Things like the value we place on ourselves. When we get a revelation of the truth of who we are as a child of God, called and gifted by Him, to partner with Him and His purposes, we live in the truth that will set us free. That freedom is life-giving and gives us an ease to approach life with. When we don’t accept that truth about who we are, we will believe lies that will cause us to stay in a place of uncertainty and turmoil.

Take a moment and reflect on the truth of who you are as a child of God. Allow the truth of that to dispel any lies of the enemy who is seeking to keep you in bondage. Choose freedom today.

**Friday’s Devotion – Spirit of truth**

**John 15:26**

*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me.*

What we learn towards the end of John’s gospel is that truth is not only a key aspect of Jesus’ nature, it is a key aspect of the nature of the Holy Spirit as well. This makes sense given that the Holy Spirit and Jesus are both part of the trinity that makes up God.

Therefore, we can expect the Holy Spirit to always lead us into what is true. The Holy Spirit will not deceive us. He is the One we ought to look to guide us into all the truth we need to live the life God has called us to live.

In an age where it is hard to know what source to rely on to know what is true and what isn’t, it is good to know that God has put the source of all truth within our hearts. What we then need to do is develop an awareness of that still small voice that God has put within us. It is that still small voice that will align with what God has revealed in scripture. It is that still small voice that will lead us into freedom, not fear. It is that still small voice that will empower and energize us, not undermine and deflate us.

Are we taking the time to listen to that still small voice?

Are we truly relying on God to be our trusted source of truth?