

## Children of light

Readings: 2 Samuel 11:2 – 11, Ephesians 5:10 - 14

When I was 18 years old and a new Christian I hated to be at home by myself especially at night time. Is anyone else scared of the dark? There is something about the dark, the night, that makes everything else seem so much worse. The apostle John writes a letter about Jesus; God from the very beginning of time. He describes how he has seen and known and experienced Jesus for himself and he wants the readers to experience the same joy he does. John writes:

...this is the message we heard from Christ and are passing on to you: God is light, pure light; there's not a trace of darkness in him.

For a couple of years I was home at night by myself quite a bit. I realised over time that because Christ was with me, I had no need to fear. Jesus shone his light into my life and showed me where that fear came from. I struggled for a while but then I realised that Jesus is the exact opposite to darkness. My fear faded a bit more each time I focused on Jesus. Thanking him for being the light eliminated my fear of the darkness.

Our first Bible reading today is from the book of Samuel and tells of King David's lowest moments. It couldn't get much worse than this for David. He had never been a rules guy; valuing his relationship with God far more than rules. So what happens when a guy like him stuffs up majorly?

Some of you will know the story very well. David sees this beautiful woman bathing on the roof of her house. Some say she was flaunting her beauty so he would see her. Others say that she was a virtuous woman who was raped by David. Whichever way it happened King David was at fault. He chose to take and sleep with Bathsheba knowing full well she was the wife of one of his mighty soldiers - Uriah the Hittite,

And months later, when she knows for sure, Bathsheba sends him a message. "I'm pregnant."

David says "Okay. The fault is mine. I'll make it right."

No he doesn't! He says "Okay. I've stuffed up. Now I have to cover my butt." David tries to get Uriah to sleep with his wife so they can pretend the baby is Uriah's. But that doesn't work. Uriah is so dedicated to King David. He won't sleep with Bathsheba while he is supposed to be on duty.

Next dirty trick David tries, is to get Uriah to carry his own death warrant out into the battle field. Uriah is to go to the front with the other troops. They are all to retreat and leave Uriah alone to die. David succeeds! Uriah dies – so all is well! Not!!!

These terrible events takes place over some months. David does not make an impulsive mistake. No he has deliberately walked in the ways of darkness. He has a character flaw that needs some serious sorting out.

David tried to quickly paper over the cracks but God had a plan for everyone's good. God confronts David with his inner darkness, through Nathan the prophet,.

David knew what he had done was wrong. He felt rotten about it and when confronted he owned up. Now according to Old Testament rules, David should have been wiped out and his Kingdom taken away. He should have been taken off into slavery and his family annihilated. That was the norm. Those were the rules when a King stuffed up majorly.

The trouble is that God doesn't follow the rules. All the way through the Bible we see people stuffing up and God pouring out his grace. When people deserved punishment; what did they get – a light sentence and much grace instead.

There are always consequences when we give in to the darkness, but most often, they are nowhere near the consequences we deserve.

Our second reading is from the apostle Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus and the surrounding towns. Paul was in prison while writing this letter. Death was a distinct possibility for him. I wonder what you would write if you thought it might be your last letter to someone.

Paul wanted the early Church to and to grow God's Kingdom. He wanted them to be far more God-centred and to flourish in their relationship with God.

What a wonderful goal! That is what we hope for in this preaching series too. We want this to be a safe place where God is free to move; a place where we respect the way he does that through our various gifts and personalities.

We are at Sermon 4 in this series; Culture of Honour.

A couple of weeks ago Jean discussed the five key gifts of the church – does anyone remember what they are?

Apostle, prophet, evangelist, Pastor and teacher. There are many more gifts than these of course. Some consider the five to be categories of gifts and under each heading come many more.

The gifts are like the spokes of an umbrella – they equip and support Christ's body ie the church which is umbrella canopy. The umbrella the pole is our relationship with Christ; essential for sustaining us all.

Then we focused on the glorious freedom of relationship that Jesus offers us as opposed to the list of rules that some think Christianity is.

Today our focus is on coming out of darkness into light; becoming children of the light of Christ.

David was able to return to God's light because he truly turned from his sin. David did care about God; they had enjoyed a great relationship together. For David, his sin wasn't about breaking the rules (though it certainly did that); rather his sin meant he had hurt someone he loved. And he deserved to be punished.

God doesn't live by the rules either. David was truly sorry, not because he knew he would be punished but because he didn't want to hurt the God he loved again. And after the seven days of mourning, David didn't ever repeat that same sin again. He was restored in his relationship with God and as King and he wanted to walk in the light.

Danny Silke, author of Culture of Honour, reports that the old meaning of the word 'restoration' means to find someone with royal blood; someone who has been removed from the throne and to put them back there, where they belong. Mostly when church leaders stuff up, they clear off somewhere else for a new beginning.

Wouldn't it be amazing if we knew how to restore them so they could walk in Christ's light again, enjoying renewed relationship with him and with his church family?

True story: a very gifted worship leader in a church got caught in adultery. It wasn't a one-off but had been a four-year affair – with his wife's best friend!

So a pastor and his wife, met with the guy and his wife.

You can imagine. The wife was absolutely devastated. The husband was ashamed of himself. He knew he'd broken the rules big time and that he deserved severe punishment. Both of their lives and ministries were apparently ruined.

The guy raved on about what an 'evil scumbag' he was. He confessed to other affairs as well.

Then the pastors's wife said something off the wall. She saw a hand coming from the sky, flipping a switch and all the lights coming on. She said to the guy it was like he is full of light and everything is totally different.

Pause

How could the guy believe that was from God? All he could see was his darkness and he foolishly thought that was who he was.

The pastor wanted the guy to see and embrace his true identity in Christ. He reminded him of Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

For though once your heart was full of darkness, now it is full of light from the Lord. Live as dearly loved children of light.

Just because that guy still had some darkness in him; it didn't mean he was not a child of the light.

The pastor asked the guy what the real problem was. (That is how his church handles any pastoral situation.) He asked lots of clarifying questions about what was really happening under the surface.

The guy knew all along that what he was doing was wrong. He knew if he got caught it would stuff everything up.

The pastor asked the guy if he had repented, and just like the story I told you three weeks back, the guy had repented but he didn't really know what he had repented of.

It turned out; the man could not show affection to his wife or children. He was a worship leader and led other people in expressing love to God but he couldn't tell his own family he loved them. He was so scared of being hurt by flawed people so he was always looking for bursts of love elsewhere.

At that point the guy recognised the darkness of the lie within him. David Riddell would call it his unbearable secret. It wasn't true that he couldn't genuinely love others or express that love to them.

And then he truly repented. And he sincerely told his wife that he loved her. And she believed him ... and she forgave him.

All of a sudden God turned the lights on for them. Hope was rekindled.

The story didn't end there. The church this couple was in wanted to offer them restoration but that process would be:

1. Confession to the church
2. Stand down period while they worked on their marriage
3. Slowly reintroduce them to their ministry roles

The pastor challenged that. He said for the last four years the guy had been leading worship in a way that led people closer and closer to God. The whole time of course, he had been lying to everyone. But now ....

Now the guy is "in the best spiritual shape of his life". His wife and children forgave him for withholding his love. He began to be much more honest about his emotions and was able to pour out his love for them. He had repented and was truly a changed man.

What the guy needed were ways to be accountable so that he didn't fall again, not punishment.

The pastor was not suggesting that we cover up stuff that shouldn't be covered up. Rather he said we need to recognise each other's' true identities as children of light by expecting the best of each other.

Punishment is rarely helpful. It simply reinforces shame and guilt. Jesus has given us a way to be free by restoring relationships – relationship with him, relationships with each other.

If we walk as children of light, out of love for God and for each other, we will be able to do what Paul says we should when he tells us to:

Learn as you go along what pleases the Lord. Eph 5:10

Isn't that statement full of grace? Learn as you go along .... We don't have to have it all sorted now. Even when we don't have it sorted we are still children of the light of Christ.

**Reflection questions:**

What areas of your life is the Lord shining his light on?

What forgiveness and/or reconciliation do you need?

What forgiveness and/or reconciliation do you need to offer to another?

Who do you need to see in the same way the Lord sees them?