

The Baptism of the Lord
January 12, 2020
“God’s Light vs. Evil’s Darkness”

Is 42:1...7

Acts 10:34-38

Mt 3:13-17

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Last week I mentioned that there is darkness in the world. However, that particular darkness is not the absence of daylight. It is the darkness of evil. It is the antithesis of anything good, true, and beautiful. It is a powerful force – But not so powerful that a pinprick of light cannot penetrate it.

One of the ways that this darkness expresses itself is in the violence of our modern society. And of particular note is the way that many people resist something they dislike.

The behavior of many Americans has become increasingly dark and violent in the way that they will demonstrate their protest. Protest is not bad in itself. However, when it becomes violent or destructive – when it disrupts free speech – it does more harm than good.

Our First Amendment protects the freedom of speech. But this does not mean violently demonstrating or violently counter-demonstrating when someone else has a legitimate forum from which they speak!

Moreover, we can usually judge any cause or idea by the behavior of those who champion it. If they use violent or destructive means to get a hearing, then there is something wrong with what they espouse.

Jesus Christ was sent into the world to liberate the human race from the darkness of sin, ignorance, and the power of evil. Several hundred years before Jesus came, Isaiah prophesied the behavior Jesus would exhibit and the kind of person he would be. He would bring justice to the nations and to the world. Yet, he would do this in a non-violent way: “not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street”! He would be especially mindful and patient with the wounded and the vulnerable. He would be full of care for those who were trying to overcome their brokenness – or only beginning to grasp the goodness, the truth, and the beauty of God’s plan and will.

Isaiah goes on to prophesy that Jesus would be a light for the nations – He would also bring light for our personal blindness, freedom from the prison of our fears – and liberation from the guilt and despair of our sinfulness!

Then Jesus finally came. He was all that Isaiah said he would be – and even more than Isaiah could have imagined. Isaiah only knew and thought of our limited, material world and our life here. Whereas, Jesus came from and operated on behalf of that other dimension which is eternal life with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel passage, we learn that Jesus came to John to be baptized. Jesus had no need to be repentant, because he had lived a perfect life without sin. However, Jesus wanted to give us an example of humility and complete submission to the will of the Father.

Submission to God can be a struggle. It means opening ourselves to God's plan and will. Often it means giving up our preconceived plans and ideas. It means admitting our sins and breaking with the evil, the lies, the grotesqueness of our personal darkness – all of which we may be only vaguely aware.

Nevertheless, if we do so, then wonderful things can begin to happen. For then, we live up to our dignity and potential as God's son or daughter who was chosen like Jesus. We also come to understand that, like Jesus, we are beloved by God – and that we have a purpose and a mission during our life here under the direction of the Holy Spirit!

Brothers and Sisters, if God made us to show forth His goodness – then we all have a vocation to manifest God's goodness wherever we find ourselves. We must bring goodness, truth, and beauty into the lives of those throughout our sphere of influence. We must demonstrate with quiet power in our actions and lives against those forces of darkness and evil which are everywhere. Because in the non-violent way of Jesus, we help him deliver others from the darkness, the blindness, and the chains which will destroy them.

So, let us pray, today, that we will never falter in this endeavor.
And may we always be pleasing to God as His beloved children!

Amen.

January 12, 2020

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