

“MELTING THE DARKNESS”

Pastor Mike Corwin

Text: Luke 7:36-50 God’s Word: Genesis 1:1-5

I - DARKNESS & LIGHT:

If you Google the definition of darkness you will see that it lists two definitions under this word.

1. the partial or total absence of light
2. wickedness or evil

This is easily understandable, isn't it? If I walk into the house at night and I forgot to leave a light on, I will enter into darkness. To remedy this situation all I have to do is flip a switch. If I'm outside I turn on a flashlight or build a campfire. You get rid of the darkness by bringing the light.

But then we have the definition that brings our faith in to the equation also. Darkness is also described as wickedness or evil. If light symbolizes God as we've come to learn, then darkness symbolizes everything that is anti-God. Darkness symbolizes the wicked of the world. Darkness symbolizes the judgment. Darkness symbolizes death. I once heard that the definition of evil and hell is "the complete absence of God"...the absence of light.

The history of our relationship with God starts out with this contrast between Darkness and Light. In the first chapter of the first book of the Bible we see this story being developed. In the earlier reading it said that in the beginning God created everything. That when he started the earth was covered by the darkness. To start the creation he uttered the words, "Let there be light." He extinguished the darkness by creating the light. He did away with the formless chaos by bring in the light and it says that the light was good. This story also tells me another important piece of my theology...God rules the darkness! God controls and overcomes the darkness. The darkness doesn't extinguish the light...the light extinguishes the darkness!

II - THE WITCH & DOROTHY:

You have to understand this contrast between light and dark to fully grasp the next few weeks of messages based on the "Wizard of Oz" movie. I see the story of light vs. dark and good vs. evil throughout this movie that was released in 1939 and is played every year for all to see. The two main characters of the movie are the wicked witch of the west and a girl from Kansas named Dorothy. In them I see darkness and evil played out for anyone who is paying attention.

Let's start with the wicked witch first, shall we? She is first introduced to us as a crabby neighbor in Kansas who is greatly upset because the little dog Toto won't stop chasing her cat or stay out of her garden. She takes the dog intending to have the Sheriff put it down so she doesn't

have to suffer through anymore of its shenanigans. As Dorothy gets taken to the Land of Oz by a twister, we find this same woman now green colored and dressed in black where she is continually plotting the demise of Dorothy because the house she was riding in fell on and killed her sister - the wicked witch of the East. She is surrounded by spooky forests, magic spells, and devilish flying monkeys! She is certainly the epitome of darkness and evil!

Then we have Dorothy. A naive country girl who has no idea how she got here. Why munchkins are so short and have strange squeaky voices or why anyone would paint a brick road yellow! She doesn't have an evil bone in her body or thought in her mind. All she wants to do is get home to her aunt and uncle and get away from the witch. So she finds herself taking a journey - directed by the good witch Glenda and the munchkins and trying to the emerald city to find a wizard who may be able to help her. Her only other concern is protecting Toto from the witch who is so evil she even wants to kill the dog! Dorothy is obviously the representation of good...of the light in this story.

III - WHY WAS SHE DARK?:

I want you to look at this story in a little different light (no pun intended) this morning. It's easy to point fingers and tell everyone how mean and evil the witch is. It's easy to condemn her for her actions and hope she gets eaten by her own monkeys. It's easy to believe she is getting what she deserves and should live in the darkness. But I have a different view. I have a different question than most people would ever ask...WHY IS SHE EVIL...WHAT MADE HER LIVE IN THE DARKNESS? Even if she was born into the darkness...why did she stay there? I think the answer is obvious...because she was never exposed to the light!

We ended last year and started this year proclaiming the promise we found in the birth story on the Gospel of John. The promise you recited this morning as your call to worship and you will repeat for the next few weeks. The fact that Jesus came to bring light to everyone. That with his birth the light was shining into the darkness of the world, and that the darkness could never extinguish it.

The witch was the witch because she was not exposed to the light! Look around you. Isn't this story still being played out in today's society and world? Don't we still have witches who are doing all in their power to spread the darkness? I know we have a world full of flying monkeys doing the evil one's wishes! Those who make money by bringing the darkness of addiction to others. Those who bring the darkness of poverty because they are green with greed. Those who bring darkness to the lives of anyone who stands between them and power or manipulation. How about the darkness of war and nuclear threat? The darkness of disease like cancer, diabetes, AIDS, HIV. The evil of abuse or sexual exploitation.

Evil and darkness still exist today. And most of the time we treat it like the munchkins did - we hide and cower, or we point fingers and assign blame. We even decide they deserve what they get. We condemn them to the continued darkness. But that's not what Jesus calls us to do. He call us to show them the light.

IV - TEXT:

We've looked at this story from Luke before. Pastor Becky looked at it with you around the beginning of lent this year. I want to look at it with you again but look at it to show you the model Jesus gives us for combating evil...darkness.

Luke 7:36-50 (NLT)

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. ³⁷When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. ³⁸Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!" ⁴⁰Then Jesus answered his thoughts. "**Simon,**" he said to the Pharisee, "**I have something to say to you.**" "Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied. ⁴¹Then Jesus told him this story: "**A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other.** ⁴²**But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?**" ⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "**That's right,**" Jesus said. ⁴⁴Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "**Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.** ⁴⁵**You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.** ⁴⁶**You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.** ⁴⁷**I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.**" ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to the woman, "**Your sins are forgiven.**" ⁴⁹The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?" ⁵⁰And Jesus said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**"

The story contrasts the representative of the church of the day, a Pharisee, and a sinful woman.

Jesus has been invited to supper at the Pharisee's house and accepts the invitation. When he walks in he is not greeted with a kiss by the host as is customary, he is not offered water to wash the dirt off of his feet from the street. He didn't even give him olive oil to anoint his head as a good host would have done. He merely seats him at the table.

Then enters a woman who we are told was immoral (probably meaning an adulterer and or prostitute). She goes behind Jesus where he is reclining as was customary to eat and begins sobbing. She is crying so hard that her tears soak his feet and wash of the dirt. She then dries them with her hair and then opens an alabaster jar of expensive perfume and anoints his feet with it.

The Pharisee saw this and came to the conclusion that if Jesus was a prophet as others said he was he would know the kind of woman she was and would be repulsed by her and shoo her

away. Since he didn't, he couldn't be a prophet. But Jesus did know what was being thought and let him know it by a short parable where he called to his attention that someone who has been forgiven much would be thankful more so than someone who was forgiven little. He then pronounces the woman forgiven...not by her actions of love but by her faith.

The story points out that this woman was not a nice woman. She evidently had sin piled upon sin in her life. Had slept with a good number of men in the community plus whatever else she had done. By Jewish law and tradition, she was the evil one in the room...the one covered in darkness and Jesus should have shunned her and sent her away...but he didn't. He didn't point a finger...didn't tell her she was going to hell...didn't condemn her for her life to that point...didn't cast her aside and let her remain in the darkness. He shined his light of love and forgiveness on her and she came out of the dark and loved him and became one of his followers and believers.

If it would have been left up to the Pharisee, she would have been doomed to remain in the darkness...but Jesus changed her life with his light.

V - DEFEAT THE DARKNESS:

We spent January talking about the light, and then in February before Lent began we identified the darkness in our community. We then launched into a flurry of ideas of how to defeat the darkness and bring it the light. We will now start meeting in the areas of our passion to discern how we will turn on the light of Jesus in all of these areas and more.

Our choice is to either perpetuate the darkness or to spread the light and penetrate it instead. We can choose to live in a community of witches or a community of Dorothy's. To be surrounded by flying monkeys or surrounded by loveable little munchkins.

Dorothy melted her darkness with a bucket of water...we'll melt ours with the Gospel. God already supplied us with the light - we call him Jesus. All we have to do is shine the light into the darkest recesses of people's lives. We have to tell them all about Jesus!

AMEN