

Are you afraid of the light?

John 3:14-21

March 18, 2012

I brought this box to show you this morning. It is a special box. It is my favorite box. I've had it for a long time, a very long time, and I keep precious things in it. I am happy to be able to show it to you, but I won't open it. I won't show you what's inside.

Do you want to know what's inside?

Me. I'm inside. My deepest desires, my highest hopes, my deepest fears. My anger is in there. My shame is in there. My feelings of inadequacy are in there.

Hurt and bitterness and envy and pride are inside. All the things I want to say but won't are in there. All the things I want to do but can't are in there. Weakness and doubt and despair are inside.

I am in this box, but you will never see me. You will never really see me, because I won't open the box. Some things, my most precious things, my most shameful things, I keep hidden, shut away, out of sight, out of reach, in the darkness.

Because if I open the box, even just a little, it will all get out! It will be like Pandora's box. Everything will get out. Everything will be exposed to the light of day, and I won't be able to control it anymore. I won't be able to control me or what people see of me anymore. I will lose control of everything. I will lose everything.

I won't be able to hold back anything. I won't be able to protect anything. I won't be able to protect me. So I won't open the box. Some parts of me, some parts that are most me, will never see the light.

It's a terrible irony, isn't it? The light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light.

The light has come into the world! The light has come into the world. We do not live in a world without light. We are not doomed to a life of stumbling around blindly and aimlessly and dangerously. We can see ... if we open our eyes. And we can be seen. We can be seen as we are. We can be known as we are. We can be loved as we are ... if we come out of the shadows into the light.

The light has come into the world. God loved the world. God loves the world. God loves all those who are in the world. God loves me. God loves you. Because of love, God sent his Son into the world to bring light for the world. God sent his Son into the world to be light for the world. God sent Jesus to us, not to accuse, not to judge, not to condemn, but to save.

The light has come into the world. The light is in the world, because the One who lived, lives. Jesus lives still and shines his light on us still. Jesus shines on us the light of truth, the light that shows everything as it truly is. Jesus shines on us the light of grace, the light that allows us to see everything as God sees it, to see ourselves as God sees us, to see the beauty that God has put in us from the beginning and can restore in us once more.

The light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light. Because the darkness feels safe. We have lived in the darkness so long it feels normal. It feels safe.

We don't want to see things as they are! We would rather see things as they pretend to be, as we can pretend them to be, to fit our purposes, to fulfill our needs, and to keep them at arm's length, to keep them at a safe distance.

And we don't want to be seen as we are! We don't want everything hung out there for everybody to see, for everybody to gawk at. We don't want to be judged. We don't want to be ridiculed. We don't want to be laughed at. We don't want to be scorned. We don't want to be pitied.

It's easier, it feels safer, to stay in the shadows. The darkness hides what we don't want to be seen. The darkness hides the ugliness. The darkness hides the weakness. The darkness hides the shame. The darkness hides the fear. No one will see it! No one will know about it! And in the darkness, sometimes, we can even fool ourselves. Even we forget it's there.

But the tragic irony is, the light is not our enemy. The light is our friend! The light did not come into the world to judge it, but to save it, not to judge you, but to save you.

This is how judgment works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light. We judge ourselves, by staying hidden, by remaining in the shadows, by refusing to open the lid, by refusing to come into the light, by refusing the help and the healing of the light, by refusing Jesus, by not trusting Jesus, by not believing in Jesus.

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