



March 11, 2018 John 3: 14-21 & 2 Chron. 36: 14-23

www.theark1.com

Connie May © 2/7/18

Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [Song in the Night](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Walking in Light and Darkness](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

As we enter chapter three of John we find: 1 There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews,² who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him.' It is interesting that John sets this encounter in the dark of night. Jesus uses this cover of darkness to uncover the light of his truth. We will encounter Nicodemus again (Jn. 19: 39) later on and find that he has indeed found the 'light'. This time he has the courage to do what needs to be done in the light. How can this Lent help me to find this same courage?

John 3:14-21

14 Just as **Moses lifted up the snake** in the desert, so the **Son of Man** must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have **eternal life**. 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not **perish** but have **eternal life**.¹⁷ For God did not send

his Son into the **world** to **condemn** the **world**, but to save the **world** through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not **condemned**, but whoever does not believe stands **condemned** already because he has not believed in the **name** of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the **verdict**: **Light** has come into the **world**, but men loved **darkness** instead of **light** because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil **hates the light**, and will not come into the **light** for **fear** that his **deeds** will be **exposed**. 21 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."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus asks us to come into the light and live with integrity. What or who helps you to do that?

PRAYER: Living in the light means living in love; a love that faces its failures and learns from them; a love that uses each lesson as a course in compassion and acknowledges that God is the source of all that is. As I work my way through my Lenten practices I realize ever more clearly my failures to love. Gracious God, help me as I lift my eyes to my "serpents" like the people in the desert with Moses, in order to love more like you. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

MOSES: Moses led his people out of the slavery of Egypt, and John reminds the people of the role of liberator by this passage. Some of the gospel writers see Jesus as the new Moses.

What is the role of the one who leads? What usually motivates them to take a stand? Why do people follow them, often at the risk of their own lives? Are there any leaders in the world today that inspire this kind of response from you? Who are they?

LIFTED UP: When Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the desert, the people were made to face that which was killing them, and in doing so, they were saved.

Think about the things that have been lifted up in your life, that when faced, you were saved from their destructive potential. How did you feel when you faced that threat head on and came through it?

SNAKE: In many cultures of Jesus' time the snake was worshipped, because it appeared to live forever. People who could safely handle snakes were thought to have special powers from the gods. On the opposite side of the coin, was the dark side of the snake's image because of the event in Genesis. The lure of evil often strikes us where we think we are the most strong.

Many people get in trouble with those things that appear both good and bad. Think about any time that you thought something was OK but later found it 'biting' you with a deadly bite. What did you learn from that experience?

SON OF MAN: Jesus chose to accept our human condition, so he could really be with us.

Try to imagine the feelings of those attracted to Jesus when he begins talking about himself as one of us. What effect does this have on your feelings about him?

ETERNAL LIFE: Sadducees did not believe in eternal life, but the Pharisees did. The idea of an eternal life developed about 300 years before the birth of Jesus and helped people struggle with the question of why bad things happened to good people. God was going to make things right in the life hereafter.

What does the term eternal life mean to you? Are there a Sadducee and a Pharisee in you?

PERISH: With such a thing as eternal life, the meanings of the word perish changes considerably.

When was the last time you used the word, perish? What choices do you make daily to avoid perishing? What realities are important enough for you to risk perishing?

WORLD: In John's gospel the world is anything that exists in space/time.

How is your life affected by believing that space/time is not all that there is? What pain or confusion have you endured because of this belief?

CONDEMN/CONDEMNED: Sometimes when we are getting accurate feedback from some of our choices, we experience it as condemnation, when indeed; we are simply seeing the consequences of our behavior so that we can learn from the experience.

Have you ever condemned yourself? Have you ever stood helplessly by and watched someone else in this process?

NAME: Being identified with Jesus' name meant that you accepted his understanding of God. In John's gospel, it means that they had accepted Jesus over John the Baptist.

Are there any ideas about God current today that conflict with the one of the gospels? What ways/sayings could help you identify those conflicts/contradictions?

VERDICT: A verdict is the judgment made about something after sufficient reflection. The gospel talks about people who choose to "stay in the dark".

What has to happen to you in order to choose to "stay in the dark"?

LIGHT: The early church saw the 'light' when they experienced Jesus. Now for the first time in human history, they saw God clearly. That light made it possible for them to make new choices.

How has seeing the 'light' in Jesus affected your choices? Has that brought you new life?

DARKNESS: Darkness was the original chaotic condition before God began the creative process in Genesis. In darkness we have no ability to get accurate feedback, and therefore are unable to learn from our efforts.

How do you avoid knowing something? Have you ever said, "Don't talk to be about that," or "let's don't go there"?

HATES: The Hebrew language lacks words that express degrees of feeling. It's either love or hate. In this case John is using the word in its fullest meaning.

Remember the times when light was focused on something that you wanted to be kept hidden, and the feelings that surrounded that event. What was that like?

FEAR: It appears that there are two basic sources of energy in the world. When we are acting out of love, we can stand and even welcome light. When we are acting out of fear, we seem to prefer darkness.

Remember the times when the energy that was motivating you to do something that was coming out of fear. Does your faith in God's steadfast love give you the courage to face your fears and break through to love?

DEEDS: Jesus' deeds always matched perfectly with what he said. If we say we love God, but hate our neighbor, there is a mismatch.

Lent is a time for self-examination. How do your deeds match with what you say you believe?

EXPOSED: In comparing our choices with the way Jesus chose we can expose the difference.

Use this Lent to look at how things are going in your faith life. What does this examination expose about your growth in love and faith?

TRUTH: By studying Truth, that is Jesus, we can find our way to our own truth. A basic truth that God gives us in Jesus is that God loves all that God creates. Since we are each a creation of God, it follows that we are loved.

Can you ever really love until you accept the fact that God loves you? How do you find what is true for you?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 3:14 // Nu. 21:9; Wis. 16:5ff; Jn. 16 // 1 Jn. 4:9; Jn. 3:17 // Jn. 12:47; Jn. 3:19 // Jn. 8:12; Jn. 3:20 // Job 24:13-17; Jn. 3:21 // Mt. 5:14ff;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: 2 Chr. 36: 14-17, 19-23; [Ps. 137: 1-6](#); Eph. 2: 4-10; Jn. 3:14-21;
Revised Common Lectionary: Nu. 21:4-9; [Ps. 107: 1-3, 17-22](#); Eph. 2:1-10; Jn. 3: 14-21;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

For seekers and believers, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. For the self-satisfied and non-believers, there is a tunnel at the end of the light. Dr. David Hirstius

Give light and people will find the way. -Ella Baker

What is to give light must endure burning. Victor Frankl

One does not become enlightened by imaging figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.” C.G. Jung

After the ‘individual’s fundament choice’ will come the common option of the mass of mankind. A day must come, he believes, when men ‘will have finally become conscious of their common unity and their intimate links with all the rest of the universe, and will hold in their hands the plenitude of their soul, to cast it freely into the divine centre’. It is then that the final option will be made, in the form of a world’s choice between revolt and worship. de Lubac, Henri. The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin. NY. Desclee Co. 1962. Pg. 113.

Many people find the Enneagram a good tool to use when reflecting on their choices. Fr. Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert have written a book called **The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective**. They explore this ancient spiritual practice used by many traditions. Learning where our strengths can be our weakness give us the insight needed to really grow. It seems like we can then ride our type “horse” instead of being drug by it.

The exalted Johannine Christology is not some abstract test of orthodoxy that has nothing to do with community living. If it is crucial to believe that Jesus is the pre-existent Word of God who has come from God and is of God, it is because then we know what God is really like – He really is a God of love who so loved the world that he was willing to give of Himself, in His Son, and not merely send someone else. Brown, Raymond E. The Community of the Beloved Disciple. NY. Paulist Press.1979. Pgs. 60-61.

Ignorant of our original self, we dwell in the dark loneliness of the loneliness, which haunts all who insist they are apart from rather than a part of God. The light of truth is revealed only when we abandon our self-centered point of view, and realize the truth that we are all the light, and all our deeds done with the Whole in mind are done IN GOD; that is, they reveal the profound and simple fact that we are always in God. Rami M. Shapiro; Listening to Jesus with an Ear For God.
Bruteau, Beatrice. Jesus Through Jewish Eyes. Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2001.

There are several things that constitute the uniqueness which distinguishes *eros* from other forms of love. The most important difference has to do with *cause*: there is only one reason that causes our love for the other beings, and that is the one being we love uniquely. It is in and through and thanks to this unique being that we love the other beings that relate to it. The highest example of this is to be found in God’s love for his creation. God the Father loves uniquely only one Person, that is his Son. The word with which the Father refers to his Son (Jn. 1: 14-18; 3:16), does not mean simply the ‘only begotten’ but also the uniquely loved one’. It is in and through and because of him that the that the Father loves all the beings that exist, for he made them ‘in him’ and ‘for him (Col. 1: 16-18). It is also by being incorporated into this uniquely beloved Son that al created beings can be both other than God and in communion with him. Pgs. 73-4. Zizioulas, John D. Communion and Otherness. NY. T & T Clark. 2006

"To judge as Christ is not to separate and divide but to cover all with God's light and love which illuminates what we have chosen." And this is judgment, that the light [Christ] has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than light"(Jn. 3:19). The light does not judge. Judgment is that "people love the darkness rather than the light. People make the judgment. What we refer to as God’s judgment is really God's revelation, God revealing to us what we have done. In God's love we will see the effects of preferring darkness over light. Through the light of Christ we will see our deeds, see what we have done to ourselves and others by judging." Raub, John Jacob. Who Told You That You Were Naked? Crossroad Pub. New York. 1992. Pages 114-115.

"Why does being capable of love depend, therefore, on being willing to go through suffering? It is because loving means going out to the things of life just as knowing means taking them into oneself. When I make the lover's choice, when I give my heart to my life rather than withhold my heart, I enter into a relationship with the things of my life that makes me vulnerable to loss and deprivation. God becomes vulnerable in loving the world, "for God so loved the world..." So if I am unwilling to go through suffering, I become unable to make the lover's choice. If I enter into God's relationship with the world, on the other hand, if I embrace suffering, that of my own life and that of others in its connection with me, I become able to give my heart. I become capable of love and of the knowledge that comes of love. I become capable of God." John S. Dunne. The Church of the Poor Devil. Macmillan Pub. Co. Inc. New York. 1982. Page 121.

Origen (circa 240 CE) in his Homilies on Genesis, delivered to the Christian congregation in Caesarea writes: “For if we have not separated from us those waters which are under heaven, that is the sins and vices of our body, our dry land will not be able to appear nor have the courage to advance to the light. “For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light [lest his works be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light that] his works may be made manifest” and appear, if “they are done in God”. This courage certainly will not be given unless like the waters, we cast off from us and remove the vices of the body, which are the materials of sins. Once this has been done our dry land will not remain “dry land” as is shown in what follows.

Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 377.

I think that those who serve most potently work on the levels of consciousness that have to do with radiating love – maybe God’s love. My own experience is that people who work with love operated on some level deeper than that conscious. It is important that you have a brain and use it, but that is secondary. The basic premise is that you allow something to come through you. Then you use your intelligence to give your work form, to give your heart’s work discipline and logic. But the transformative energy, that which can change events, that heals, that helps, that serves, comes from somewhere deep inside. Julie Glover

"He [God] has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness". 3:18-21

"For God has established the spirits in equal measure until the final age, and has set everlasting hatred between their divisions. Truth abhors the works of falsehood, and falsehood hates all the ways of truth. And their struggle is fierce in all their arguments for they do not walk together." 4:16-18 Bible Review. February, 1992. Page 23.

A neutron does not simply adhere to a proton. Rather, both the neutron and the proton have to undergo a transformation for the bonding to occur. The proton and the neutron each give over part of their mass, which becomes a flash of light released into the universe. Brian Swimme

It took nearly a half million years for there to be light. That’s how long after the Big bang the universe took to expand enough to allow photons (light particles) to travel freely. Discover Magazine. 3/2010. Pg. 80.

What is meant by light? To gaze with undimmed eyes on all darkness. Nikos Kazantzakis

The plodding photon, or how the speed of light looks sluggish on a galactic scale

According to Albert Einstein’s theory of special relativity, the speed of light (approximately 299,792 kilometres – or roughly 7.5 rotations around the Earth – per second in a vacuum) is the Universe’s speed limit, and therefore the fastest we could ever hope to travel through space. Swift as it might seem, when it comes to traversing the vast expanses between solar systems and galaxies, it’s still very slow-going. Indeed, the nearest galaxy to the Milky Way, Canis Major, is 25,000 light years away. Set to a mesmerising score by the US composer Steve Reich, Riding Light is an illuminating look at light speed, simulating the journey of a photon from the Sun’s surface to just beyond Jupiter’s orbit. For a brisker take, see a condensed, three-minute version of the same [video](#) here.,

"We are only the light bulbs, and our job is just to remain screwed in!" Desmond Tutu

If you have a light, and the whole world should come to you in order to take light from it—the light itself does not diminish—and yet each person has it all. St. Catherine of Siena

Love is not consolation, it is light. - Simone Weil

SELECTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015. Pgs.58-61. To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2012. Pgs. 53-55.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009. Pgs. 75-78

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005. Pgs. 68-71. To

Janice Grana Ed. [Images](#). Upper Room Pub. Nashville, TN. 1977 PRAYER OF LIFE by Linda Felver Page 12:

PRAYER FOR MYSELF by Cynthia J. Symonds Page 34.

John Shea. [The God Who Fell From Heaven.](#) Argus Communications. Allen TX. 1979.

A PRAYER TO THE GOD WHO FELL FROM HEAVEN by John Shea. Page 90.