

Two Contrasting Lifestyles

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let's begin our worship today. We're singing in Psalm 103, Psalm 103 in the Sing Psalms version, and that's on page 135. The tune is Herongate. We're singing verses 1 to 11, one of the great Psalms of praise, where God is praised by the Psalmist as he actually looks into his own soul and calls upon his very inner being to praise the Lord.

With all his heart. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart. Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits. His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. Verses 1 to 11 to God's praise. And we'll stand. If you're able to stand, please stand to sing.

Praise God, my soul, with all my heart. Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits. His praise, my soul, in song proclaim.

The Lord forgives you all your sins. And heals your sickness and distress. Your life he rescues from the grave. And crowns you in his tenderness. He satisfies your deep desires. From his name and grace, my soul, with all my heart. He satisfies your deep desires. He satisfies your heart. And he satisfies your deep desires. From his unending stores of good. So he He satisfies your deep desires From His unending stores of good

So that just like the eagle's strength Your youthful vigor is renewed The Lord is known for righteous acts And justice too, downtrodden ones To Moses He made known His ways His mighty deeds to Israel's sons

[3 : 3 2] The Lord is merciful and kind To anger slow and full of grace He will not constantly reprove For in His anger hide His face He does not punish our misdeeds Or give our sins their just reward Our greatest love as I attend

Towards all those who fear the Lord Let's now join together in prayer briefly O Lord, our God, as we give thanks once again Like the psalmist for all the good things That you give to us day by day We come before you now to worship you And we pray for your help as we do so That our hearts too may be stirred up Like David's was So that we may come to call upon the Lord In praise and thanksgiving We pray especially now for our children We thank you, Lord, for those who are here today For the creche, for the Sunday school, for tweenies We thank you for all the children who belong to us As a congregation And for the special place they have in our hearts We pray for them, O Lord, at this time And we pray for them That as they continue to grow up in years

That they will grow in the knowledge of the Lord And we pray for them today, Lord As they receive teaching from your word That you would truly bless them And bless that to them We pray for your protective care of them In every way, morally and physically and spiritually We ask, Lord, that you would shield them about With your own power As they go from day to day in this world As they attend school As they come to other activities as well We pray for them As they do these things That they will know the blessing of the Lord Remember today also those who teach them Those in our Sunday school classes We thank you for them And for the Bible class too And we pray That in all of these areas, Lord That you would bless our young people And go before them And teach them your ways Hear us now, we pray And pardon our sin For Jesus' sake Amen Amen Okay, children It's good to see you all out today And I'm going to say something Is that at the end of the service?

Buddy End of the service? Okay Okay Okay Minister always needs directions from church officers So I'm going to speak to you today A bit about Bluetooth Hands up Don't have to say anything But hands up Those who know what Bluetooth is Or where you'd find Bluetooth Some of the older ones probably know Maybe some of the younger ones as well Hands up those who know what Bluetooth is Hands up those of the adults Who know what Bluetooth is Okay There's quite a decent percentage of you Well Bluetooth Is a wireless system By which you can join together Mobile phones Or your mobile phone with a speaker Or your mobile phone with headphones So that you don't need wires It's very handy You just connect them together wirelessly And actually I just discovered

Looking at this That it takes its name Bluetooth From a Danish king Way back in the 900s And he united Denmark together And he united Norway under his His rule as well And when the person who invented Bluetooth in the 1990s I think it was Was looking for a name For this wireless system He came across this name Harold Bluetooth The name of this king Who united these people Of Of Denmark And took Norway in as well And he said That would be a great name For my wireless system Because it unites Various Um Various phones Or other Other Electronic devices Together So what happens In Bluetooth You can actually set Your phone Let's just keep it to the phone For a moment You can set your phone With the Bluetooth On it Live You have to have The Bluetooth Active on it You can shut it off But if you want to Use it You need to put it on And the thing is If you want to

[8 : 57] Communicate Your phone With another phone Or with another device They also must have Their Bluetooth on Because that way They communicate To each other And Bluetooth As you need To have that on Makes your phone Discoverable Other phones That have Bluetooth Can then discover Your phone As long as it's No more than About 10 meters away It doesn't work Any further away Than that But through Bluetooth You can actually Then transfer Photos Music Files Whether they're Typed up files Or photos Whatever You can transfer That very quickly Through Bluetooth And it reminded me Of how God Has made himself Known to us In Jesus Christ That's how we come To know God And we wouldn't Be able to know God Unless God Had made himself Discoverable to us

And just like Bluetooth on your phone The Bible is God's word Where he has Made himself Known to us Where we can Find out about him And more importantly Where we can Communicate with him Now just like If you're going to Use Bluetooth You must have it On on your phone So to communicate With God You must have Your mind And your soul Switched on I'm going to Speak in the Sermon today About people Who don't have That Who don't want God Who don't want To communicate With God But for all of us Here For all you Young folks as well I'm quite sure You want to Communicate with God You want to Speak to God You want to Hear God's voice Speaking to you And that's what You do When you come To pray to God You're communicating With God So it's important That our souls If you like Are switched on That we have The desire In our hearts To communicate With God To meet with God To get to know God To tell God

About our concerns To ask him To forgive our sins To ask him To guide us Through the things Of life And in every other way In which we can Communicate with God We hear God's voices Also speaking to us Through his word So Bluetooth It's important You have it switched on And it's important Our souls Are switched on today Not just to young folks But ourselves As older ones too That we are switched on If you like To hear God's voice To be able To communicate with him And to hear him Communicating with us That's why Jesus came into the world So that we would come To know God Through him And in knowing God Through him Come to enjoy Eternal Life Well you can Google Bluetooth And you'll find out A lot more about it Than I've said today And it's very interesting Especially That it goes back To such a long time And we're back In the 900s Okay now We're going to say The Lord's Prayer together

So let's just say The Lord's Prayer Our Father Our Father Which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name Thy kingdom come Thy will be done On earth As it is in heaven Give us this day Our daily bread And forgive us Our debts As we forgive Our debtors And lead us not Into temptation But deliver us From evil For thine is the kingdom The power And the glory Forever Amen Now the children Leave through The side door As well Please To go to your classes Today Because the front door Is very windy Or it's very windy At the front door I should say We're going to praise God Now from Psalm 31 Psalm 31 On page 243 The tune is Spore And we're singing From verse 19 to 24 How great's the goodness

Thou for them That fear thee Keep'st in store And wrought's for them That trust in thee The sons of men before In secret of thy presence Thou shalt hide them From man's pride From strife of tongues Thou closely shalt As in a tent Them hide Verses 19 To 24 To God's praise Amen There's the goodness Thou for them That fear thee Keep'st in store And rose for them That trust in thee The sons of men before In secret of thy presence

[14 : 11] Thou shalt hide Shall hide them From man's pride From strife of tongues Thou closely shalt As in a tent Them hide All praise and thanks Be to the Lord For he hath magnified His wondrous love His wondrous love To be within A city fortified

For from thy night For from thy night God of I am I hear in my ears Christ has said My voice It hurts The wind To thee With Christ My moon My moon My way My way O love The Lord All ye His names Because the Lord God God The faithful

Lamb He blen Justly Thou Ears Thou Reward Lord ■■■ doth on the Lord depend.

Let's turn to read God's word now as we find that in John's gospel, gospel of John chapter 3. We're reading from the beginning, down as far as verse 21. John 3, from the beginning of the chapter.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

[17 : 46] Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things, and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

[18 : 58] No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment.

The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. But everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God. Amen.

[20 : 08] May God follow with his blessing our reading of his word today. Let's again call upon him in prayer. Our gracious God and our Father in heaven, we thank you for the light that your word brings to us, for the way that you, yourself in it, are the light of the world.

We thank you today, O Lord, as we give thanks for the privilege of being here to worship you. We thank you for the way in which your word of truth guides our thoughts. We pray today, Lord, for a receptive heart.

We pray that you would give to us by your Holy Spirit the ability that is not of ourselves to receive the things of God gladly, to hide them in our hearts so that we might live by them, that they may be shown forth in the life we live.

Lord, we thank you today for the many privileges that are ours in your providence. We know that there are so many things that disturb us and cause us disquiet in the world and in the generation that we live in.

And yet we know that we have so many benefits, so many advantages as your people, as your church in the world, so much freedom to enjoy, so much, Lord, of a knowledge of your own truth in the midst of the darkness that surrounds us so much.

[21 : 25] Lord, help us, we pray today, to be honest with you, to be honest with ourselves. Help us to be honest with your written word. Help us to handle it aright in speaking and in hearing.

And give us, we pray, to have our minds shaped by it as the truth of God. We ask today that your blessing will be here with us as a people. We give thanks, O Lord, for all who come to worship you here week by week, for all who join us online, especially those, Lord, who are unable themselves physically to be here.

We give thanks that they are able to participate in the worship services through the live stream that we are privileged to have. We pray today for each and every family, each and every home belonging to us as a congregation.

We thank you again for our children and young people. Lord, we give thanks for the number of them that we've seen going through to Bible class and to the tweenies and to Sunday school today.

We pray, gracious one, for them once again and ask that you would bless them as they develop in their years. We pray, too, that you'd grant your blessing to all our activities as a congregation, in addition to our services of worship, O Lord.

[22 : 45] Remember all that we anticipate in this week ahead, God willing. And we pray that you would bless every venture that seeks to make you known and make the gospel known amongst ourselves and in our community.

And we ask today, O Lord, that your blessing will accompany all of these efforts, that they may be used to further your kingdom, to advance your glory in the world. And we pray, O Lord, that we may take such an interest in that as we ourselves, if we don't attend yet.

O Lord, we pray that you would bless each and all of these activities. And we pray for the Hope Explored sessions that are about to start. We pray for them and for those who lead.

We pray that many will come, Lord, to hear of the death and the resurrection, the exaltation of our Lord. Lord, we ask, Lord, that you would give us especially to have an interest in that above all else, for this is how you have come to provide salvation for us.

We pray, Lord, today that you would bless all in the congregation and of our friends and neighbors who are unwell at this time. We pray that you bless those who are recovering from illness, those recovering from treatment, those anticipating treatment or surgery in days to come.

[24 : 03] We pray your blessing for them. We pray for all, O Lord, who have other trials in life to contend with, those especially, Lord, who have difficulties in their families and tensions.

We pray for those who have various aspects of addiction to contend with. We ask that you would bless those who seek to help them from week to week.

We pray for Road to Recovery. We pray for our street pastors. We pray that you'd bless them as they interact with people from week to week. Lord, bless them, we pray, and protect themselves as they go about their work.

We pray for all in our health service, hospital, care homes, Bethesda. We ask, Lord, that you would continue to bless us through these means. Grant to us, O Lord, we pray that as we give thanks for these facilities so that you would bless them with further resources and enable them to use their resources well and wisely in the benefit of others.

We pray that your blessing will be with all our medical practices and doctors and practitioners. We pray your blessing for them, for all who attend to care in our hospital as nurses, consultants.

[25 : 17] We pray for them, Lord, as well. We pray that you will bless those who are in charge over us in government. And Lord, while we do lament the failures in many ways of those who lead us and different ways in which that failure is shown to us in their lives and in their day-to-day carrying out of their duties and their confessions, we lament especially, Lord, the fact that so few of them seem to look to your ways and so many of them seem to have rejected the light of your truth.

Lord, we pray that you would turn us into your ways. We pray that you would forgive our many sins as a people. We pray that throughout our land, throughout our communities, the light of the gospel may powerfully shine.

We ask, Lord, for ourselves that we may give more place to prayer and to supplication for your blessing to come, for your power to be shown turning people to yourself and empowering us as your people to be living witnesses for you in the world.

We ask now that you would continue, Lord, to bless us here as we turn to your word. We pray that you would help us in our understanding and application of it and all with the forgiveness of our sin.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, before we turn to that passage in God's word, let's sing once again. We're going to sing in Psalm 26.

[26 : 51] Psalm 26, page 30. We'll sing verses 1 to 6, not verses 1 to 9.

We'll just sing the four stanzas, verses 1 to 6. The tune is Balerna. Declare me innocent, O Lord, I've walked in blameless ways, and I have trusted in the Lord, not wavering all my days.

Test me, O Lord, and try my heart. My inmost thoughts survey. Your love surrounds me. From your truth my feet will never stray. Verses 1 to 6 of Psalm 26.

Declare me innocent, O Lord, I've walked in blameless ways, and I have trusted in the Lord, not wavering all my days.

Test me, O Lord, and try my heart.

[28 : 18] My inmost thoughts survey. Your love surrounds me from your truth.

My feet will never stray. I do not sit with worthless woe.

I shun the hypocrite. I hate the wind.

His gatherings. With them I will not sit.

I wash my hands. I wash my hands. In illicit.

[29 : 33] And when blessed is my heart, I go apart.

Your altar, Lord, the place you set upon.

Let's turn now to John chapter 3 and reading at verse 19. And this is the judgment.

The light has come into the world, and people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.

[30 : 44] When I was in secondary school, there was a time when activities were available for the last two sessions on a Friday each week. Various kinds of activities, sporting activities, other kinds of craft activities.

At one time, I and a few friends decided to take up oil painting for these activities. And I remember the first time we went into the class with the art teacher. He handed out these large books with oil paintings in them.

They were actually paintings mostly of Impressionist paintings, by Impressionist painters. So they weren't the kind of thing that we were expecting. We were expecting nice landscapes or something like that.

And one of my pals, not knowing the teacher was standing behind him, behind him said, this is just rubbish. And the teacher stood and said, that's not rubbish, boys.

These are masterpieces. And of course, what the boy was showing was his own ignorance. He was really bringing judgment upon himself for his ignorance because he just didn't know anything much about these paintings.

[31 : 52] But he decided nevertheless to give his opinion. And his opinion, of course, was not right. Well, in a spiritual sense, that's something of what you find here in verse 19 onwards.

This is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. The light has come into the world.

God has revealed himself to us. That's what we're trying to say to the children through the illustration of Bluetooth. Light has come into the world, but that doesn't mean the light was accepted or even welcomed because people turned from the light and still turn from the light and they're really bringing judgment upon themselves.

They're evaluating the light and then they dismiss the light and reject the light. And what they're doing is really saying, that's not according to my better understanding of what human life should be.

And of course, that's just bringing judgment upon themselves because speaking out of our own natural ignorance as sinners. And it's rejecting God's masterpiece of salvation that this is about.

[33 : 03] Light has come into the world. We'll see that that's especially so in the person of Jesus and in the work that Jesus has done and accomplished through his life, through his death, through his resurrection.

Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. God is saying, here is my masterpiece.

Here is what nobody else could have provided but myself. And yet people say, no, I don't want that. I don't think that's attractive at all. It doesn't fit with my expectations.

I can do better than that myself. And you can see, first of all, in verse 19, that John speaks about the condemnation.

This is the condemnation. That's really judgment that's used here in the translation, but it's more than just judgment. The word used actually means judgment after examination of something.

[34 : 07] It means condemnation as a result of rejection. This is the condemnation. The light has come into the world. People love the darkness rather than the light. So there's the condemnation spoken of in verse 19.

And then verses 20 to 21 speaks of two contrasts or a contrast between two types of people. Those who hate the light and those who hate the light, it says there, are those who do wicked things.

They don't come to the light and they do not come to the light in case their deeds should be or so that their deeds would not be exposed. But the contrast with that is those who do the truth or what is true.

They come to the light so that their deeds may be clearly seen that they've been carried out in God or in relation to God or to the honor of God.

That's basically the outline of our study today. And I want to do that in relation to the kind of situation we face in our society. I mean, I need not tell you, you can see it very clearly yourselves, that our society is steadily breaking up.

[35 : 14] There are so many things about our society that really makes us say that. When you consider, for example, all the attacks and the disintegration that has happened even in such things, I'm just going to mention a few examples.

You'll know about them yourselves. Marriage, gender confusion, gender transition, the life of the unborn, family values, what family should be about, sex education materials, violence in schools, various addictions, health service concerns, and that's not saying anything about the disintegration of the Lord's Day itself.

You can see from that and you could add to that list many ways in which our society is breaking up around us. And I want to try and get from this, see from this passage today, how this rejection of the light, how this hatred of the light really stands as a basic factor in that breakup.

There are many other factors, yes, but this is one of the most basic factors as to why this is happening in our society, amongst us as a people. Why is all this taking place? What's the underlying reason?

Well, here is a prominent underlying reason that light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light. See, the Bible is always straight talking.

[36 : 39] And we don't like straight talking when it's the truth that's been spoken of. But God does the straight talking and we really should be listening. We are listening. I know in terms of our own situation here, but so many people in the world don't want to receive or to listen to that.

So what is this saying to us? Well, first of all, the condemnation. The light has come into the world. And you notice the definite article there. It's the light. This is the judgment.

This is the condemnation. The light has come into the world. And in the Gospel of John, that is pretty obviously referring to the light that has come from God in Christ.

Jesus spoke himself. And for example, in chapter 8, one of the I am's of John's Gospel in chapter 8, verse 12, where Jesus there spoke of himself.

Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. And then you flick forward to chapter 12 as well.

[37 : 41] You find verse 46 there near the end of the chapter where you find Jesus again saying, I have come into the world. Very similar to the words in chapter 3. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

If anyone hears my words, does not keep them, and so on. It's all tied together, isn't it, with the light that has appeared in Jesus. God revealed himself and is revealing himself through the Gospel, through Jesus Christ, in the person of Christ.

That's the light that has come into the world. God has made himself known as more than just being discoverable. He's actually saying, this is who I am. This is what I am like.

And yet people loved the darkness rather than the light. And notice, there's a definite article with the darkness as well, because it's telling us that this is the polar opposite of the light that has come into the world.

The darkness that people love is the exact opposite. It is all that's opposite to the light that has come in the person of Christ, especially into the world.

[38 : 56] And that means that what is opposite to the light, all the activity of sinful behavior, all the activity of what he says here are those who do wicked things or evil things.

Those who do these things, they're not living in a kind of spiritual neutrality. The darkness is not a spiritual neutrality.

It's not as if it's just neutral compared to the positive elements of the light. The darkness has its own positive attributes. And the positive attributes in John's gospel, when you read through John's gospel and what he says about the light and about its opposite in the darkness, it's the positive activity of sin and of evil.

And it's especially in John's teaching, the darkness that is antagonistic to God. It's the darkness of the world and its sinfulness, the world and its lostness.

You see what he's saying here. Light has come into the world and yet people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

[40 : 07] People loved the darkness rather than the light. Now what's that saying to us? It's saying that this is something that is done knowingly.

Something that is done deliberately. Something that is done using the process of reason and thought. You don't actually love something without thinking about it.

Without considering it. And here he is saying people loved the darkness rather than the light. it's not something they actually slipped into accidentally.

When people reject the gospel in the world in which we live. When you see the elements of darkness, the activities of darkness, the darkness of our age, it's not something that's just done as it were.

it's not... Okay, I'm not sure what's going on there but it's obviously to do with the electronics.

[41 : 13] The darkness of our world is a deliberate darkness. People love the darkness. It's not something that they just do without thinking about it. It's a deliberate knowing choice.

Why is that? Because their deeds are evil. Well, John is a wonderful gospel. John has so many wonderful images to present to us.

Many of them are comforting but this one is very uncomfortable. What he's saying to us is that people reject the light. People hate the light. People don't want the light.

Why? Because their deeds are evil. Their workings are evil. It's very similar in many ways to the teaching of Romans 1 verses 18 to 32 where to reject that people actually choose to live an alternate lifestyle to the one that God himself actually says is pleasing to him and that's not something they do unknowingly.

Paul is saying just like John here it's a deliberate choice. it's a deliberate rejection of the light. Now and again it's not something that happens sporadically or just once in a while.

[42 : 26] It's something that characterizes the life of these people constantly in an ongoing way. It's a constant with them. Everyone who does wicked things.

But then you see the question is well what are wicked things? How do we know what wicked things are? How do you distinguish wicked things from good things?

People have different opinions about what is wicked and what is not. And we've chosen largely to confine the definition of wicked to gross crimes or sins.

Things that are really very much to do with open corruption or whatever. But wickedness in the Bible takes in much much more than that. In fact it's a word that really describes what we are without Christ.

What we are without salvation. We may not see ourselves as wicked. People out there today would not say that they are wicked. But this is God's definition of how do we know what wicked things are?

[43 : 31] God has defined them for us in the Bible. God tells us what is and isn't acceptable to him. What is and isn't wrong with ourselves. And that's where he describes for us what wicked things are.

That's why there is such a constant attempt to take the Bible out of human life. Because those who love the darkness, those who want to promote the darkness, those who think that the darkness is really the light that people need, whether it's in the teaching of our children, in medical ethics, wherever you find it, this is what is really of concern to them, that the Bible really shows up that sort of behavior as wrong, and the word wrong really is not acceptable.

People who actually love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil, they hate the light and they don't come to the light. It's a constant dismissal of the authority, of the teaching, of the words of the Bible.

You think of every attempt in your own lifetime of having this Bible removed and its teaching removed from various areas of our society, our schools, wherever else you think about it, universities, schools, places of teaching, places of care, where else do you find it?

I remember quite a number of years back when I was part of the committee of Bethesda hospice, that a certain inspection had come up with recommendations and one of the recommendations was that the plaques that had been donated to Bethesda and were actually shown on the walls throughout the building that had texts on them should actually be removed because these texts would be offensive to certain people and Bethesda's practice is that there's no prejudice, there's no discrimination as to who can get care there, whether they're Christians or not, whether they're believers or not, the hospice is there for them, the facilities are there for them, but this inspection said no you can't have that because that's going to offend people and that's something that people will not agree with.

[45 : 52] Well there you see it's a very small example of where you find people wanting to remove the influence of the light, the references to the light from human life.

And you see what it's saying here? Those who hate the light, those who do wicked things as God defines them, they hate the light.

And you couldn't put it any stronger than that because that's really as strong as John could have put it. Everyone who does wicked things hates the light. It's not a matter of them being unconcerned about this thing one way or another.

It's not that they couldn't care less about it. It's that there's a positive hatred of it. All you've got to do is really stick your head above the parapet on social media today, come out with a Christian opinion against something that you know is wickedness, and you'll soon find the reaction to that is hatred.

They hate the light. They don't want to see the light. They don't want the light to shine upon them at all. And that's a characteristic of our society. It's not just confined to Twitter.

[46 : 56] This is emblematic of people's thinking, people's reaction, people's insistence on living their way, whatever else people will say, whatever the church says, and especially what the church says.

And that's really, friends, the main factor behind our society falling apart. The issues I've mentioned already, you can add to them yourself, as I've said. But the reason for that, the underlying reason, one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, is because as a people, we've largely turned away from God, turned away from God's way, turned away from the things that God says is best for us as a people, turned away from the light, and instead we've come to love the darkness.

Love the darkness. Not look at it in a sort of neutral way or a casual way. We have come as a people to love it, to love its ways, to love its characteristics.

Of course there are exceptions. You're exceptions yourselves. There are many exceptions thankfully, but by and large what you see going on in our society throughout all the levels of our society is hatred of the light and a love of darkness.

At the end of our study I'll come to apply this to ourselves and how we should react to that. But you see then it says those who hate the light, they do not come to the light.

[48 : 21] They don't want to come near the light. That's why the Bible is so distasteful to them. Why the idea of the gospel and hearing about sin and the salvation from sin is so distasteful because they shun the light.

They don't like the light. They hate the light. They will not come to the light. It stands to reason. Nobody is drawn to what they hate. And if you hate the light you're not going to be drawn to the light until God changes your heart.

There's an aversion to the light. And I want you to see how this has been a characteristic of human behavior and human response to God ever since man fell as recorded in Genesis 3.

And from verse 3 to verse 10 of Genesis 3, these are important verses in regard to what we're looking at today as well for other reasons too.

but you'll find here from verse 8 especially where you find they heard, that's Adam and Eve, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

[49 : 30] And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. What's happening there? The light has come. God has come into the garden.

Man has now fallen. Man has become a sinner. Man has turned his back upon God. Man has chosen his own way. So he tries to hide. He doesn't want the light. He doesn't want to come near the light.

The light is now distasteful to him. The God with whom he wants love to have fellowship is now the one he wants to be as far away from as possible. You see what's happened in people's hearts and why they love the darkness rather than the light that become corrupt inwardly.

And that passage goes on. And God said, the Lord God called to the man and said, where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid.

I was afraid and I hid myself. And you see, that's one of the reasons that people shun the light. They don't want the light. They will not come to the light because they're afraid of the light.

[50 : 39] They know the light exposes sin. They know the light puts us to the test. They know the light contains things which will actually call upon us to change our way of life.

And so we shun that. We hide from that. It's not to our taste. God to our people do this so that their deeds should not be exposed.

It's the best translation I think. It says here, lest their deeds should be exposed, but it's more than that, so that their deeds be not exposed. And the word exposed means much more than just brought to life and being revealed.

It actually means include such ideas as shame, conviction, condemnation, the word that's used here in verse 19.

That's what the light does. It exposes things judgmentally. You can't place your life under the light of God's word, of God's truth, and not expect it to bring up things which will be distasteful to you.

[51 : 51] Which will actually initially condemn you until God shows you that your condemnation has been accounted for in Jesus, and you accept him, and your condemnation is then removed.

But that's what God's truth does. It tests, it tries, it convicts, and so those people who hate the light shun it and don't want it.

That's the contrast, the first contrast, those who hate the light, and it's contrasted with, I went through this very quickly, those who approach the light, whoever does what is true, and again literally it's whoever does the truth, the truth as God has revealed that in Jesus, the truth that's revealed in the light that Christ is, the light of God's truth.

Whoever does the truth, and you take John 14 verse 6, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. You go to John 17 where Jesus prays to the Father, Father sanctify them, sanctify the disciples, your people, through your truth, your word is truth.

Jesus, the person of Jesus, the word of God, the truth of God, this is what he's saying, those who do the truth, in other words, what he means by that is those who live in obedience to Christ.

[53 : 13] that's the big distinction, that's the big difference, that's the great contrast, those who reject the light, those who love the darkness, those who do wicked things, those who don't come to the light, these are so much a contrast to those who love the light, who want more of the light, who draw near to the light, so that their deeds may be seen to be carried out in God.

It's the doing that pleases God, in contrast with the doing of the previous verse, the doing wicked things that please themselves.

The contrasts are all the way through every strand, every layer of our society today. So what should our reaction be to this?

It's one thing to know all about this, things. But where does that leave ourselves as a Christian congregation, as Christian people? Well, of course, it means that we ourselves first of all must come to the light, must come to the Lord, must come to give our life over to Jesus, to the light, and not shun it, and not put it aside, and not be like those here who hate the light.

But having done that, I want to speak of someone near the beginning of the chapter, Nicodemus. Because it's very interesting that these verses are in the context of Nicodemus being addressed by the Lord.

[54 : 49] You see, Nicodemus came by night. And what's night? It's the opposite of daylight. And it doesn't just mean this literally. I think in the spiritual meaning, in the theology of John, light and darkness have a profound theological and spiritual meaning.

So when Nicodemus came by night to Jesus, it wasn't just so that he wouldn't be seen by his fellow members of the Sanhedrin, the fellow teachers of Israel.

John is really presenting us with a spiritual truth in that he was still in darkness spiritually. He didn't know the Lord. He was interested. He had come to take note of him, but now he wants to find out something else from him.

But he's still in darkness spiritually and morally. And as you trace Nicodemus through John's gospel, you'll find something very interesting. He appears again in chapter 7, where he's not yet really set out as a true believer in Christ, but he is actually speaking against those who want to bring Christ under arrest and try him and are obviously antagonistic to him.

And what he says there near the end of chapter 7, as you have it, is Nicodemus speaking up against the Pharisees, against the rulers, and the officers that came back with this opinion about Jesus, no one ever spoke like this man.

[56 : 11] Pharisees said, have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities of the Pharisees believed in him? This crowd, this rabble, that's what it means, who don't know the law, they're cursed.

Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, one of the Pharisees, said, does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing, and learning what he does?

And what's the reaction? Oh, instant opposition, instant antagonism. They replied, are you also from Galilee? Do you belong to him as well? Are you a disciple of his as well?

Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. There's instant hostility, instant rejection, even at the thought of him being associated with Jesus.

And the third appearance, well, where's that? That's in chapter 19 and verse 39. Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus has died on the cross, and Joseph came and asked Pilate to give him permission to take the body of Jesus away.

[57 : 16] Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes and 75 pounds in weight, they took the body of Jesus bounded in linen cloths as the burial custom of the Jews, and they buried him in this new tomb in the garden.

You see what's happened? He's come to be interested in Jesus in chapter 3. He's come closer to being a follower of Jesus in chapter 7. He speaks up for him, or to an extent in defense for him.

And then in chapter 19, he comes out on the side of Jesus. And he comes out on the side of Jesus with his special reference to the cross and to the death of Christ.

Now, where does that leave us in regard to the disintegration of our society? What is the answer to that? Well, the answer is people's lives being changed.

The answer isn't people coming to experience what Nicodemus experienced in being born again. Because society will not change until the individuals change.

[58 : 32] And for the individuals to change takes the power of God. The power that brings rebirth. The power that enables us to turn and move out of the light and come out of the darkness and come into the light.

And to love the light. Instead of loving the darkness. And that's what needs to happen. That's what we need to pray for. I know you're praying for it, but we need to pray for it with all the more earnestness.

When we realize that this is one of the underlying factors of what's happening in our society, our prayers need to be more consistent, firmly fixed upon the situation as it is, convinced us we should be that only God's reviving power is going to change this.

That the only thing that's going to change us is changed people and people changed by the power of God. Friends, this is vital. We have the privileged position of looking at what's happening around us and having the privilege of calling upon and beseeching our God to come to actually intervene, to come to change things by changing people, by giving ourselves further impetus spiritually, to be on our knees more constantly, and I'm speaking to myself, to actually appeal to God, because unless that happens, the darkness is going to actually grow.

More and more people are going to be enveloped in the darkness. Now, we're not saying this to discourage you, so we become despondent, or reach a level of near despair.

[60 : 23] This passage is telling us, this is why things are as they are. But look at Nicodemus. This is how things can be changed from what they are to what they should be.

May God bless his word to us. Let's pray. Lord, our God, you have brought before us in your word how your people are described by you as the light of the world.

And you call upon us, Lord, to let our light shine before people, so that they may see our good works and bring glory to our Father who is in heaven. Forgive us, we pray, O Lord, whenever we fall short of this, as we often do.

Forgive us for our reluctance. Forgive us for our coziness with the world. Forgive us, Lord, for every way in which we have failed to live up to the standard of being your people as lights in the world.

Lord, be merciful to this generation, we pray. Bring about, we pray, that change that only you can. Grant to us the power of your spirit. Grant to us the force of your truth.

[61 : 36] O give people, Lord, to see the wastage of human life without you, the grotesqueness of ungodliness, the way in which it is an affront to you and your eyes.

Lord, we pray in your mercy that you would indeed turn us as a people, and to that end we pray again for those who rule over us, for the governments in our land, for the king on the throne, for, Lord, all those who have such places of eminence and authority and influence in our land.

Bring them under the influence of the gospel, the influence of your truth, the influence of the light, and turn them from the love of darkness into the love of Christ.

We pray in his name. Amen. Now, the final singing today is Psalm 119, Psalm 119, and that's at page 164.

We're singing verses 113 to 120. And the tune this time is Finart. The double-minded I abhor, but your commands I love, O Lord.

[62 : 52] You are my refuge and my shield. I've set my hope upon your word. You evildoers, leave me now, that God's commands I may obey. By your word keep me, I shall live.

Let not my hope be swept away. The psalmist's concern to be different, to be an alternative to the ungodliness of his own age, similar to what we've been thinking of this morning.

So, these verses 113 to 120, the double-minded I abhor. Amen. The double-minded I have more, but your commands my love, O Lord.

You are my refuge and my shield. I set my hope upon your word.

You need to achieve me now, that God's promise I may obey, I cure, your word, give me I shall live, let not my hope be swept away.

[64 : 46] upon me and I shall be saved, for your deeds I have respect, which I have respect, all those who stray from your commands, and practice all to do, reject, you reject.

The wicked you discard my cross, therefore I love your holy law, my holy grace for your holy law, my holy grace grace for me of you, of your all hands I stand in all.

Now I take it the main door is actually being used to vacate the building, if not you'll be given directions, yes it is open, okay, so that's fine. I'll go to this door to my right this morning.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen.