

Bennochy church: 4th February 2018

'I can only live where there is light, but I die if the light shines on me.' What am I? I am a shadow. We all cast shadows, but only if there is light. I am not a scientist, but it seems to me, the shadow itself, is neither light nor dark. It is an area of contrast. Only visible, because the light shines on other objects. Otherwise, they would never be seen.

If we live in the light, we cannot fail to cast a shadow. And as the sun gets lower, the shadow we cast, gets longer. Our lives always affect the lives of others. In the way we live we can never be just neutral observers. In the words of John Doone, *"No man is an island entire of itself"*.

How would you answer this question? What do we wish to be remembered for. I think we would want to be remembered by our legacy. What have we left to the world? An echo that speaks into the future, our shadow, in some way, cast upon future generations. What will people say of us, and the shadow we cast?

One motif that runs through scripture is that of light. It symbolised the very presence of God. From the very beginning of the world the book of Genesis says, God separated light from darkness, indeed without light there would be no darkness. They live in a kind of mutual relationship, one cannot exist without the other, yet, we are told this, it is light that shines

into that darkness; that is the movement. Darkness has never extinguished light. Light is the active partner in this relationship. Light always holds the power.

John wants to tell his readers two very important things, and in single word, he links the present activity of God, to creation itself. John says, from the very beginning, the Word already existed. Through him God made all things, and he was the very source of life itself. Not only that, what is happening right now, is also the activity of God. John the Baptist, he is not the light, but, he comes to tell about the light. He points to that same Word, the true light that comes into the world, that shines on us all.

It was important for John to tell of the continuity of the work of God. It is the same God who crafted the world, as described in the poetry of Genesis, and who has now been incarnated into the world. In John chapter one, he is known as the Word. We call him Jesus.

"The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son." (v14)

John is a theologian. Crafting ideas and images and putting them down on paper. He is the PowerPoint of scripture. Yet, behind these well chosen words is truth. As real then as they are

today. John writes this, in spite of the presence of the Word of God, many did not recognise who he was.

We can relate to that. These ancient words ring true in the world today. If God is here. He is not recognised. If God speaks. Few listen. As a society, we are not unique. The context is very different, but God is still not recognised. This eternal truth is captured in the images of light, dark and shadow.

The scriptures tell us that light and life sit together. All are born, the shadow of God's activity, is cast upon us all, but is recognised only by a few. Why does God in such a way? Why does the shadow, cast by the cross, not transform all that it touches? What makes people blind to the work of God?

These are huge questions, and I have no answer, except to say that the questions themselves are important. More important than any answers we can find. The key thing here, is that God came into the world. The creator becomes part of his creation. And any response we have to that, boils down to our faith, in unanswered questions!

It is no coincidence, that John, later in his gospel, has Jesus say, *'I am the light of the world'*. (John 8: 12) . Jesus here picks up the opening words of John and applies them directly to himself, picking up an ancient story, where Moses approaches a burning bush that is never consumed. Moses asks God, if the Israelites asks, who sent me, what is your name? What will I say? Moses

hears these words, *"the one who is called I AM has sent me to you."* (Exodus 3: 14)

In a way, John is seeking to answer some of these unanswerable questions. He moves from the abstract of image and theology, in chapter one, to a tangible human being, and in chapter eight, John gives us a concrete example of those who fail to recognise Christ. It is another example of those uncomfortable conversations. This time it is between Jesus and the Pharisees. These two passages of John sit side by side. One giving expression to the other.

John patterns his gospel in such a way, that he scatters these words I AM into the mouth of Jesus across his pages. It is the very name of God himself. He is making the point, here is God himself, even if many do not recognise him.

The challenge to those of us who do recognise Jesus, is to then follow his example. We don't generate any light, but we can reflect the light of Christ and cast God's shadow, of compassion, hope, and justice into the world.. Amen.