

Monday, July 27, 2020

A light to our paths

- Pastor Hank French

Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Could it be true? If we follow Jesus will we "never walk in darkness?" Well, it depends on what following Jesus means and what walking in darkness means.

The writer of the first letter of John gives us a clue; "Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling (1 John 2:9-10).

It may seem simplistic, but "light" and "love" are synonymous terms; they mean the same thing. When Jesus declared in John 8 that he is the light of the world, he was declaring, for those with ears to hear with, that he is the love of the world. And when he declared in Matthew 5 that his followers are the light of the world, he was declaring that those who follow him are also the love of the world.

That's something! It's also a bit intimidating. If it means being the love of the world, I don't know if I am up to being the light of the world. In fact, I'm pretty sure I'm not.

I have run into folks from time to time over the years who thought they actually were the light of the world. It was obvious that they were more or less delusional. I am an imperfect person and so are you, and so are those who think they really are the light of the world! We are all imperfect creatures who are a strange mix of light and darkness. We are capable of love and we often love; but we are also capable of being unloving, which is to say we sin. To sin is to walk in darkness, to act in ways that oppose the light and love. But darkness, sin never has the last word. The last word is God's word and that word is the word of forgiveness.

1 John 1:8-9 says it well: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

What does it mean to confess our sins? It means to own up to the fact that we all spend some time "walking in darkness." And if we do that, we are forgiven. And if we are forgiven, we are given the freedom to make better choices, the freedom to choose light over darkness, love over fear and hatred. That's the "good news" Jesus proclaimed—we are forgiven, and we are being cleansed from all unrighteousness.

The psalmist wrote: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105). Jesus is the Word of God; he is the light that lightens our paths and shows us how to be light, how to love.

Prayer: Whenever I stray into darkness, call me back to the light, back to Jesus, back to love. Amen.