

I. The Light Shines; Sunday, July 27, 2014 (Sunnyslope)

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be
pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

- A. "Good morning, church!"
- B. Just this past Wednesday evening, we hosted another Christian history and theology learning and discussion session at our house
 - 1. This particular session was focused on the Trinity
 - 2. And to keep things simple, we focused (as much as possible) specifically on the timeless Trinity...
 - 3. ...and side-stepped Incarnation (for now)
 - 4. In our next session, we'll cover the Incarnation and personhood of Christ
- C. Now of course, it's extremely difficult to cover the full nature of the Trinity in only a single hour
 - 1. We touched on the history of Trinitarian theology
 - 2. And we covered some of the early arguments and resolutions about the Trinity
 - 3. And we concluded with a different way of looking at the Trinity
 - 4. But there was, of course, so much more we could discuss
- D. And for those of you who believe theology is boring, way too detailed, complicated, and not meant for the average Christian to participate in, I have a joke
 - 1. How many theologians does it take to change a light bulb?

- a) Well, first, they must hold a council to decide whether the light bulb should be soft white or cool white
 - b) Then they must hold another council to determine whether they should accept fluorescent or incandescent lighting
 - c) Following their acceptance of incandescent over fluorescent lighting and soft white over cool white, several other councils of hundreds of theologians over a period of hundreds of years must decide whether there is to be but one filament contained in one light bulb or whether there are to be three filaments in the one bulb
 - d) Additional centuries must pass before several groups of theologians protest the use of soft white incandescent bulbs and begin bickering over whether to convert to fluorescent lighting or return to cool white incandescent bulbs
 - e) Eventually, Christ returns in glory, eliminating the need to replace the light bulb
2. Now, this joke is only slightly funny because we can often feel like the study of theology is overly complicated and pointless
 3. But I'd like to point out that theology is purely the struggle of mankind to understand (as much as it can) about God
 4. Theology is just humans thinking about God and trying to reason about God based on what we know from the Bible
- E. That word "reason" is important; it means to use logic and think through things
1. It means to use sound judgment, good sense
 2. To form conclusions or inferences from facts

- F. We are told throughout Scripture that to think, to reason, to seek wisdom, pleases God

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Ephesians 5:15-17

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,
¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.
¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

- G. Some would claim that we cannot really, truly understand God, that we cannot really, truly acquire God’s wisdom

1. I don’t particularly like that idea for a couple reasons
2. First and foremost, we have Scripture that tells us the opposite; that if we seek God’s wisdom, we will find it

Proverbs 2:1-4

¹My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ²turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding— ³indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure

Proverbs 2:5-6

⁵then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. ⁶For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

3. And now secondly, I dislike this idea that wisdom is not attainable because the idea seems analogous to false teachings about holiness
 - a) In churches that don’t believe in holiness...

- (1) (Which is to say churches that do not believe holiness is possible in our Earthly lives even with the power of the Holy Spirit)
- (2) ...we see a built-in excuse for falling into sin
- (3) If you believe to be holy is not possible, then it's easy when tempted to say, "Well, I can't be holy anyway, so I'll succumb to this temptation"

b) By contrast, if you believe that sanctification (a fancy word that means to be holy) is possible (but only through the power of the Holy Spirit)...

- (1) ...and you believe we are (as Scripture says) called to be holy...
- (2) ...then we are more greatly motivated to stand against temptations
- (3) That's because we know we have no excuse
- (4) We have been given the opportunity to withstand sin
- (5) We simply need to exercise that opportunity to its fullest

H. So we see that learning, understanding, acquiring the wisdom of God is good, and it is a pursuit commanded of us

I. And I find it particularly interesting that the very word used to define Jesus before He was incarnate in human form was "Logos"

1. The word "reason" is so important and so critical to Christianity (and to what God desires of us) that it is indeed the pre-incarnate name of Jesus Christ

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2. In the original Greek, the word for "Word" is "Logos"
3. Logos is a Greek word that has a subtle and profound meaning
4. It means a literal word, yes
5. But it is also the word for logic, reason, and philosophy
6. To think about something rationally is to employ "logos"
7. A reader of the Gospel of John in the first and second centuries would have read the word "logos" in John 1:1 and thought less of it meaning "word" than it meaning "reason"

John 1:1

In the beginning was Reason, and Reason was with God, and Reason was God.

- II. Now speaking of John, chapter 1, I'd like to walk through parts of the first 13 verses of that chapter in detail
 - A. In the context of the Trinity and of Reason, I believe we can learn some profound teachings from this part of Scripture
 - B. So I'd like to read through and study here, but I'd like to do so by replacing the word "word" with the word "reason"

John 1:1-5

¹In the beginning was Reason, and Reason was with God, and Reason was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- C. There's a lot here, but let's start by looking specifically at verse 2
1. Here we have a key view into the Trinity
 - a) Christ was with God in the beginning
 - b) He's not called Jesus yet; He's called "Reason"
 - c) But He's with God
 2. And notice the phrase "in the beginning"
 - a) The Bible doesn't refer to it as "before the beginning" because there is no before
 - b) God created the universe, which includes both space and time
 - c) Therefore, there cannot be a "before the universe" because without time there cannot be a before
 3. We can dive even deeper on this a little by looking at Genesis 1

Genesis 1:1-3

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

- a) Now looking here, we can see a few very interesting things
- b) First, of course, is the same language from John: "in the beginning
- c) But I have to admit that when I was younger, verse 2 really bothered me
 - (1) It bothered me because I knew God created all things, and He did so first by saying "let there be light"

- (2) But in verse 2, prior to God creating light, there's a reference to the earth and "the deep" (in other words, the land and the sea)
- d) I realized after some study that verse 6 through 8 talk about God creating the sky, separating "water from water" (or organizing things)
- e) And then verse 9 is when land first appears
- f) So going back to verse 2, let's look at a few key words
 - (1) The earth was "formless and "empty"
 - (2) The word "empty" comes from an ancient Hebrew word that means void, or null, or non-existence
 - (3) The verse means: "The earth didn't exist"
 - (4) The earth was, in the beginning, an idea in the mind of God
 - (5) And we know from the Gospel of John that Reason (the conduit of ideas from inception through creation) was with God and was God
- 4. Going back to John, let's look at verse 3
 - a) Notice that everything ever created was created through Reason
 - b) Reason is the conduit through which ideas pass from inception into creation
- 5. But now look at verses 4 and 5; in Reason was life
 - a) And the Bible uses light to describe life

- b) So we see an analogy between reason, life, and light
 - c) Reason, or thought, or wisdom is described as light or illumination
 - d) By contrast, darkness is both the absence of reason (meaning the absence of thought), and also the absence of life (meaning death)
6. So in Christ, there is life and light or illumination meaning understand and wisdom
- a) And outside or beyond Christ, there is ignorance, a failure to think, and ultimately death
 - b) And we can draw comfort from verse 5 that death cannot overcome Christ
 - c) Death cannot overcome the life of man so long as we are with Christ
- D. When we witness to non-Christians, when we explain why we are Christian, it's tempting to say that because of our faith in Christ, we are saved from hell
- 1. And certainly this is true, but fear of hell is not why I'm a Christian
 - 2. Instead, it's because as a Christian I have the right to be called a child of God
 - 3. And this seems to me to be a much more motivating reason to follow Christ

John 1:12-13

¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

- 4. Through our faith in Christ, because of our submission to God and obedience to God's commands...

5. ...we are not entitled to salvation through heredity, or inheritance, or through some law or laws
6. But rather because we become fully adopted sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, loved and accepted by God as though we were Christ

III. These few verses from the first chapter of John have many purposes, but 2 jump out at me this morning

A. First, they are to us believers a source of great comfort and encouragement

1. We are sons and daughters of God
2. Just like darkness cannot withstand against light...
 - a) ...death cannot withstand Christ (be that spiritual death or ultimately physical death after the second coming of Christ)
 - b) Death has already lost
3. Christ is reason, rationality, thought
 - a) And critical thought illuminates
 - b) If we are in intellectual darkness, we know from Scripture that if we genuinely seek after knowledge, wisdom, and the will of God, we will find truth and will become wise
4. Christianity is not foolishness, as many non-Christians would have you believe
 - a) It is instead rational
 - b) It is truth
 - c) It is the way
 - d) It is the life

- B. But the second purpose that jumps out at me this morning is perhaps a bit of wisdom as it pertains to evangelizing, our spreading the word about Christianity
1. When we share our faith with others, what do we say?
 - a) Do we say things like, "You should believe in Jesus so you'll go to heaven and won't go to hell"?
 - b) Do we say, "You just have to believe, even though it doesn't make sense sometimes and there are things that go beyond our understanding that we'll never, ever know about"?
 2. It may be wise to take a different tack
 - a) We aren't supposed to live in ignorance
 - b) Christ is life and light
 - c) Christ is, literally, Reason
 - d) And God desires us to know, to be wise, to become illuminated
 - e) We are called time and again in the Bible to learn, to grow, to understand, to be wise
 - f) To be a disciple of Christ is to follow in the brightly lit path of righteousness towards Reason
 3. By setting our feet on this path, we are not simply saved from damnation
 4. We are adopted into the Family of God
 5. Made whole
 6. And made complete
 7. Amen