

A Light in the Darkness

Part 2: The Solution

Matthew 1:20-21

INTRO

We are going to get heavy fast... but I promise I'm going to do my best to make it better by the time we're done.

Stick around... might be the most important episode we have done.

Called series A light in the darkness b/c There is a lot of darkness in this world... a lot of pain.

- Hostility / Anger / Dehumanizing / Polarizing
- Isolation/ Loneliness/ Loss/ Broken relationships... no matter how hard you've tried to mend them
- Innocent people hurt... you've been hurt by others
- It's a harsh world

Every religion and philosophy offers a reason for this pain, **the darkness in the world** ... even offer their own solutions.

Biblical writings say that the root of the darkness is the religious word SIN.

Breaking the Law of Love.

- Someone saying, "What I want is more important than you."
- Putting wants, desires, preferences over God and others.

We've all experienced this right?

- Younger: Siblings fighting you for what they want
- Spouses only concerned about their own world and point of view
- Co-workers / bosses only out for themselves
- That other political side that cares only about power and not the people

We usually think the darkness in the world is caused by others being too focused on their own world.

And sure you make mistakes but you don't intentionally SIN and hurt others right?

Chiropractor/Massage- Got to get deep & hurt a bit to make you better...

Those mistakes you make, have made... ever do them on purpose... ever a result of a choice you chose to make?

What do you call a mistake you do on purpose?

Ever kill a friendship/relationship bc you weren't getting what you wanted?

Biblical writings... not just what we do... who we are... born in kingdom of sin.

I've never taught my kids to be selfish, Maybe Liz taught them! No, it's just in them. They're just little sinners. We all are!

You're a sinner. It's who you are... We are natural born citizens of the Kingdom of Sin.

So what do we do?

Most religions/philosophies- Start doing more good things to outweigh our bad

But giving a million dollars to charity doesn't make up for letting your anger hurt others. Can't undo the past. How much money (how heavy a pile) would it take to unkill a relationship or unhurt someone? In the end, have to admit we can't unhurt that person or even ourselves. If we are truly honest, we have to admit-

The darkness in the world is the result of the sin in us.

Let's twist the knife just a little more... God hates sin.

But why?

B/c he doesn't want you to do what you want?

His holy smiter is getting rusty and he wants to do some smiting?

No... **God hates sin b/c he loves you and sin hurts you.**

Ultimate Result of sin is death... Sin separates... Death is separation-

Physically from body.

Spiritually from God.

Relationally from others.

So why does God let it go on? Why not just stop all this darkness and sin?

Well who's causing all this sin?

- You
- Me
- All of us.

To end sin God would have to end the cause... **us.**

Unless... there was another way...

Christmas is God's answer to the overwhelming darkness of sin.

GOD:

Matthew opens his eye-witness account about Jesus' life framing as God's response to the darkness of sin in the world.

Mary pregnant / Joseph going to divorce... then

Matt. 1:20-21 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream...

- I know the angel thing is hard to swallow
- Jesus said there are angels so I go with it.
- So Joseph was hallucinating an angel?
 - Dreams very important in culture... still are. Culture placed a lot of importance on them so God used to communicate.

“Joseph, son of David,” the angel said...

- We often think of Joseph as some unknown carpenter... which he probably was... but the ancient Jews (like most of the ancient world) were very big on genealogies... and Joseph could trace his back to the greatest king in Israel’s history... David. Through whom God had promised to bring a king for eternity... the solution to the sin problem.

...”do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, [Joshua- The LORD saves], for [here’s the big point... here’s where God had led all of human history] he will save his people from their sins.”

Might have taken Joseph back to synagogue school-

Psalm 130:7-8 O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is unfailing love. His redemption overflows. He himself will redeem Israel from every kind of sin.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity.

But how... how does Jesus (even if he is God) being born save us from our sin?

- To teach us how to live better?
- How to avoid doing bad things... how to be more loving...?

He would give us what we actually need to remove sin... forgiveness.

The only solution to the darkness of sin is forgiveness.

The separation Sin creates is also a debt.

The hurt we cause doesn’t go without notice...

God is God of justice and our sin deserves justice

- What penalty would be fair for all the hurt/evil/pain we’ve caused will cause?
- Allowing sin to follow its natural path- Death.

But instead of us having to pay the steep penalty, God himself came and took the penalty for us...

AND

He conquered the power of sin- death... by raising himself from the dead.

Rom.6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

God wants to give us life! Now and forever life. This is what is meant by Jesus bringing light into the world. He is the light and life for all humankind.

Jesus didn't just save the world from our sins... not just bad deeds... **but also from the POWER of sin.**

He made a way to restore us, remove the separation that sin caused between us and God...

In fact it's exactly what Jesus said about himself...

John 14:6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

How do we accept the payment.. How does the gap close?

So simple it's easy to miss... Trust. That Jesus is our way to God. That his payment paid everything once and for all..

Every other religion, philosophy offers a method/something we have to do to solve the sin problem... **Jesus is the only one who offered himself as the solution to sin.**

Every other system says, "You are bad and need to make up for it. Try harder." The result? Ongoing Guilt and fear and exhaustion.

Jesus says, "You are a captive in the kingdom of sin... I came to set you free. Choose to walk out and follow me to a full life."

YOU:

What do we do?

Admit you are a sinner.

- Don't dismiss it. Not a 'mistake'
- Look the truth square in the face... you are a sinner and you can't do anything about it.
- Humility to fight through the anger and/or denial... you are worth God dying for.
- Courage to fight through shame... he died to take it away to bring you a new identity as a child of the king in the kingdom of God

Accept God's forgiveness and new life.

- Often it seems too good to be true...
- If God loves us enough to come and die for us... why would he make it difficult.. He already did the hard part.
- All that's left to do is trust his love and forgiveness.

If there's never been a time in your life that you admitted to God you were a sinner, asked for and accepted his forgiveness.. Invite you to do that today... even right now... prayer.

- Reach out. Help get you started.

When you do and if you have in...

3. Follow Jesus

When you accept His forgiveness and receive new life, He gives you His Spirit to guide you (conscience) and empower you to overcome sin. We call it "repentance." It simply means a choice to turn away from sin and toward a obedience. It's a choice we make out of gratitude to a loving forgiving Father and then it's accomplished in the power He gives us.

It's not "trying harder." It's "trusting more!"

This choice to accept Jesus' forgiveness is a commitment to a life of transformation and purpose.

- HE came to save his people
- You are his people
- Who is your king? What kingdom do you live for?
- We have a **new life** to live and a new role to play... we were given new life on purpose for a purpose... more next week.

WE:

Yes the world is dark... and despite our best efforts, we've made it darker.

But the light of life has come and brought peace and joy and a true solid hope... we are known, loved, forgiven.

The only solution to the darkness in our world is the light of Jesus' forgiveness.

Questions

1. What was your reaction to the description of sin in this message? Why do you think that is?
2. Read John 3:16-21. What stands out to you in terms of what Jesus offers you/us?
3. What questions/barriers are there for you in following and responding to the light of Jesus? How can your group pray for you in this?