



2 Corinthians 4:1-6

TITLE SLIDE

Have you ever had that experience of speaking to someone and they just don't have a clue of what you're talking about. Having just come back from abroad, I'm only too familiar with that. But I also know that when talking to many people about Jesus, I might as well be talking to them in double dutch. Why? Is it because I'm not good at explaining spiritual things in a way they understand? Possibly. But even when I think my explanation has been crystal clear, to the listener it sounds like rocket science, or something weird.

A verse we read this morning may help to explain why that may be the case.

VERSE They do not believe, because their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. Satan is the god of this world and he's the one that is responsible for keeping people in the dark.

FAWLTY TOWERS

Have you ever had that experience of going into somewhere to ask for something and the person who you want help from is less than helpful. Here is a picture of the personification of unhelpfulness, Basil Fawlty, the person every Guest House and Hotel Manager seeks least to aspire to. More frequently we come across the know-it-all shop assistant, usually a mobile phone or computer salesman who makes us feel 3 inches tall, blinds us with science and then sells us something that's quite unsuited to our needs. Are they trying to make fun of us or what? Here's an old clip from Not the Nine O'Clock News

NNOCN CLIP

The god of this world is someone who uses a confusion of words and actions to blind people's minds to the truth of God, rather like the mocking shop assistant.

BAG ON HEAD And people end up with a bag on their head asking for slimline salad dressing rather than what they asked for or needed. The world is full of people with their minds darkened when it comes to God.

SMORGASBORD

A smorgasbord is a Scandinavian breakfast buffet where you get a huge choice of different kinds of breakfast items and you can take your pick. People are either confused, think all religions lead to God, or who pick and chose the best bits of each to live to.

OR BAG ON HEAD

Or more likely prefer to think as little about it as possible and prefer to walk around with a bag on their head, never thinking too hard about faith and dismissing it quickly when faced with this.

This bag on the head approach to life reminded me of this little video piece by the Alpha people

ALPHA CLIP

There are many people in Felixstowe, particularly in the younger generation that see life as a pointless progression of birth and death and the bits in between.

MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS

Is there more to life than this? Of course there is! Well, that's what I believe and I know most of you do as well. Into the darkness of our minds, Jesus has shined His light into our lives. This is what John says of Jesus:
VERSE In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. John 1:4-5 (NIV). Before we came to Christ, we walked in darkness – in ignorance of God, with a bag on our head, not knowing the way and probably asking the question "is there more to life than this?" When Jesus came He was the light that shines into the darkness of the minds of me and women. For many in

the world, they see the light and as John says, they haven't understood it. They see light but don't recognise the significance of it, but for those that do, then life makes sense, eternity makes sense. Jesus said this.

VERSE *Jesus said:* 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 (NIV)

Are you someone who still feels in the dark about life, death and eternity. Are you saying to yourself "is there more to life than this?" There is and that can be found in Jesus. Ask God to illuminate His way for you this morning. It's amazing the number of times I've known people who have struggled to understand and make sense of the christian faith. They are attracted to the light but they don't understand. And then it's as if someone has switched a light on and everything makes sense. If you need God to turn the light on, why not ask Him to turn the lights on. Do take the opportunity to pray with someone afterwards. Jesus said "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. "

For those of us who already have the lights on then we need to understand this:

WE ARE CALLED TO BE LIGHT "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. Matt 5:14-15

How does God lighten up people's lives? Well it's not some beam of light extending from heaven that does it, but what lightens people lives and makes them understand Jesus is alive is because God's people show Jesus in the way they live and what they say. That's the way God shines into people's lives. And the challenge is that we are the light of the world and God wants us to shine. So,
HOW CAN WE BE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST. Let's see what this passage in 2 Corinthians can tell us.
The first way is THROUGH OUR LIVES

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells us this. VERSE In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matt 5:16

Here's Paul's take on this idea.

VERSE We put aside all secret and shameful deeds; we do not act with deceit, nor do we falsify the word of God. In the full light of truth we live in God's sight and try to commend ourselves to everyone's good conscience.

If people who don't know Christ are amongst our family, our circle of friends, our workmates, our neighbourhood, then how much of Jesus have they seen in me? How much of Jesus have they heard in my words? That's what our display is about. The church should be the expression of who Jesus is in our lives and our community. To reach men, women, families, the disabled, the sick, the elderly we need to be the ones who shine the light of Christ. Jesus shone that light by engaging with them, who identified with their problems, met their needs – did something about it. Reaching people is proactive: we've got to work hard to reach people, show them God's love and joyfully share Good News with them.

If our church is devoid of children, youth, young families, older people then how come they've not seen Jesus in us? I believe that every so often God gives us a wake-up call about how we are being light to others. A wake-up call for our personal conduct, and a wake-up call for how we conduct ourselves as a church. The world has moved on, our community has moved on, we have moved on. Are we shining a light, and if we are, are we shining it in the right place?

VERSE For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. Ephesians 5:8

BY RECOGNISING THE ENEMY The second is realising that the enemy works very hard to keep people in darkness.

VERSE ... their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. It's a simple truth of scripture. People don't live in darkness because they're ignorant or stupid. They are kept in the dark because satan keeps them that way. They are happy to live with the smorgasbord of faith or with a bag on their head. If we don't make an effort to reach people for Christ, then be assured that the enemy won't slack for a minute in keeping people in the dark.

Let me remind you of what we read. BY RECOGNISING THE ENEMY AND SHINING THE LIGHT He keeps

them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

How do we put a stop to Satan. Easy – just show Jesus, be Jesus and share Jesus with those around us. It's no use lamenting over the lack of children and families in our church, or the lack of people coming to Jesus today. Satan hasn't become more powerful, or God less powerful in our generation; the people of God just need to do what we're called to – to shine a light on people and dispel the trash people believe.

So how do we do that? We show the light of Christ:

BY BRINGING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S GLORY It is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ. God has enlightened us. Virtually all Christians can point to a time when they saw something of the glory of God in their lives and saw the power of God working in some way or other. But sometimes, pressures, life or even just routine or familiarity can cause that to wane.

IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS?

It depresses me sometimes to hear the language, listen to the hopes and aspirations, see the conduct of Christians and see that it just reflects the nonsense of the world which says "is there more to life than this?" No wonder we can't bring light to people if we've fallen for the same lies as everyone else. Satan attacks us with his lies – his fiery darts. That's not what God calls us to – Christianity is genuinely life-changing and I believe God wants to bring us to a place where we allow Him to show us His glory in a life-changing way.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

In an evening, some weeks ago we had a look at how God wants all of us to experience more of His glory. Because if someone has a life-changing experience, it is so often the spur to a change in them and to a desire to see others receive the same change. For Peter, James and John, their whole perspective on Jesus was changed in a day where Jesus took them to a mountain and they saw Him in His true glory. It was a stunning experience. They carried that with them. They got some other pretty amazing experiences of God too – the risen Christ, the day of Pentecost, amazing miracles.

I believe it's a long time since many of us had a real encounter with God in His glory. It isn't something that happens every day, but it's something I believe God wants to give us and wants us to ask for. It's always at a time of His choosing, but always happens at the right time for His purposes. It's usually life-transforming for those involved. Let's look back at that verse I just quoted.

VERSE This is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ.

(Lights) God has shined a light in our lives. Great. We understand something of God. (lights) But He wants to switch more lights on than that. On the mount of Transfiguration, they saw Jesus, not as just the guy they had known, but they saw Him transfigured, changed. They saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Actually it was not a unique phenomenon in Scripture. It was quite common actually. In the previous chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul relates to us the story of when Moses received the commandments, when he returned to the camp his face shone so brightly that people were blinded by it and he had to wear a veil until it faded.

God wants us to each have such a knowledge of His glory that it just shines to everyone. No veils wanted or necessary. Jesus just wants to shine through us.

Am I going to allow Him to turn on my lights?

Am I prepared for Him to turn more of my lights on so I might see His glory?

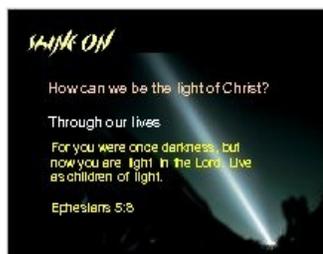
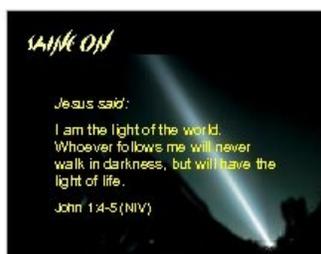
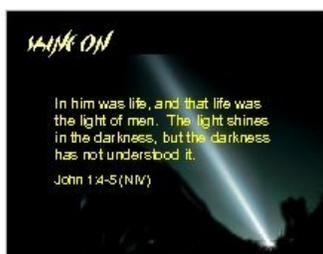
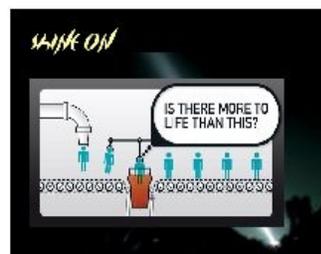
Do I desire to know more of His glory?

Prayer

TITLE PAGE

*Preached by Mark Reid
MRBC Felixstowe 8/5/11
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Slides Referred to in Text



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By recognising the enemy and shining the light

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