

## Illuminating the dark corners of our lives

Mark 1:4-13

January 9, 2000

*How are you? No, really ... how are you?*

Most of the time when we ask that question, we don't expect an honest answer. And, most of the time, we probably don't want one! We're just making conversation; it's an expression of greeting to show that we are interested.

Now there is nothing wrong with just making conversation, and the interest is usually genuine, but, today, I am asking the question with a different purpose. I really want to know: *how are you?*

*You're fine? Good ... I believe you!*

Recently, my wife, Lynne, brought some apples home from the grocery store -- big, shiny, beautiful Red Delicious apples. When we cut into the apples, however, they were all brown and rotting on the inside. They were red, but not delicious! They looked fine, but were not fine. But I believe you!

In most situations, we do look "fine." In most situations, we do our best to look "fine" - - we show off a shiny, polished image, keeping hidden the doubt and hurt and fear and shame that are in us. Even here in church, maybe even especially here, we do our best to show ourselves at our best.

I know ... you're fine ... I believe you! But what about those who are not? What about those who do come bearing hurt or guilt or doubt, a vague feeling of emptiness or a unspoken sense of futility? If those hurts or doubts or emptiness are never spoken, never revealed, what will become of them? And if it is just those things in us that bring us here, seeking the comfort of God's presence, but those things remain forever hidden, what good will it have been to come?

Sometimes we are good at fooling other people, and sometimes we are even better at fooling ourselves. We grow so accustomed to things as they are, we begin not to see what is really there. We say we are fine and we believe it ... because we have stop looking into dark corners.

We need a new perspective, we need to see ourselves again, all of ourselves, in a new light. It's amazing how different the family room looks when you're having company come! *There are cobwebs in the corner?* Well, company is coming! It is Epiphany! Jesus, the light of the world, is here!

Epiphany is a season of light, a season celebrating the incarnation of Jesus, the living Word, the light of the world. The season begins by remembering Jesus' baptism and ends by remembering Jesus' transfiguration. Jesus' baptism reveals Jesus as one who is with us. Jesus' transfiguration reveals Jesus as the one who bears the light of God.

It is interesting that these are the only two occasions in the gospel of Mark when God speaks directly. God says, *This is my Son*. Jesus, the light of the world, reveals God to us. In Jesus, we see the truth of what God is like. In Jesus, we see God as God really is.

And, Jesus, the light of the world, reveals us to ourselves. Through Jesus, we see the truth of what we are like. Through Jesus, we see ourselves as we really are. Jesus illuminates the dark corners of our lives.

Is this a good thing? If you stick around for Epiphany, you may find out! For each week of the Epiphany season -- from now until the first Sunday in March -- we will look into some of the dark corners of our lives and the things that lie there -- doubt and guilt, fear and bitterness, even evil. Perhaps you'd like to stay away from the church during Epiphany!

But as long as the dark corners of our lives remain in the dark, as long as we pretend and avoid and ignore and deny ... nothing changes, nothing heals. As any recovering alcoholic can tell you, as any cancer patient can tell you, it is just those dark corners we ignore or deny that control and consume our lives and rob us of health and fullness of life and joy.

The light of Jesus is an exposing light, but it is also a healing light. It feels good to be found out! It feels good to have nothing to hide! It feels good to be known! The light of Jesus shows us as we are -- no pretending, no ignoring, no denying -- and sets us free! The light of Jesus exposes our diseases ... and begins to heal them.

The light of Jesus illuminates the dark corners of our lives. So, like I said, you may want to stay away from church for a while ... Or maybe, just maybe, you'll want to come all the more!