

I. Introduction

A. Light and dark adaptation

1. The process that happens when going from a dark environment to a light environment and vice-versa
2. Both adaptations are best controlled by changing behavior and possibly by changing route.

B. People walking in darkness have seen a great light.

1. 2,800 years ago, Isaiah prophesied that Jesus, the light of the world, would come to rescue humankind from its sinfulness.
2. This is what Christmas is all about - the light of Jesus!
3. Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at how we can respond to the light of Jesus as seen in some of the characters around the Christmas story.

\*This morning we begin in John 3:16. Please turn there in your Bibles.

II. Darkness preferred

A. The love of God (John 3:16-21)

1. John 3:16-18
  - a. God loved the world.
  - b. The action of God's love was giving/sending Jesus to die.
  - c. The what of God's love
    - 1) He sent His Son, not a lamb, a bull, or a goat. Costly.
    - 2) He opened the door of eternal life to the already condemned.
    - 3) The way to experience God's love is by believing on the Son, not working for the Son.

\*This is the ultimate depth of love because it was deeply costly for God, infinitely beneficial to us, and absolutely free.

2. John 3:19-20
  - a. Everyone in darkness, darkness is sin, and sin is condemnation
  - b. Darkened heart
    - 1) Works are evil; do wicked things
    - 2) Don't want deeds exposed
    - 3) Darkness keeps deeds from exposure.
    - 4) Hate light because it exposes everything, so they avoid the light

3. John 3:21

B. Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1-4, 16-18)

1. Context: wise men and the star and the king (read verses 1-4)

2. Herod the Great
  - a. Made king by Roman senate; loyal to whomever was in power in Rome
  - b. Not full-blooded Jew; wanted legitimacy (didn't eat pork); presented himself as the protector of Judaism
  - c. Successful ruler and cruel tyrant
    - 1) 10 wives; murdered his favorite
    - 2) murdered several sons ("it is better to be Herod's pig than his son ...")
    - 3) Disposed of anyone who might interfere with his rule or desires
3. Herod's response to the light (read verses 16-18)
  - a. Herod did everything within his power to extinguish the light (John 3:19-20) because of what the light of Jesus exposed.

\*Remember light adaptation? Change in behavior or change route ...

- b. Consequences of light
  - 1) Jesus' light reveals the truth about all things.
  - 2) The truth about ... God; ourselves; salvation; what is good/beautiful; evil/ugliness; how we ought to live; all right thinking, all right feeling, all right doing is defined and measured by Jesus.
  - 3) Herod could not afford to be exposed by the light.

\*route and about my change, not the light

\*The light of Jesus requires us to surrender our lives and then adapt to Him by changing our behavior and changing our route.

### III. Our opportunity

#### A. My adaptation

1. Confession: to agree with God about my sin in community with others through the local church
2. Prayer: spending time in personal and corporate prayer for strength to pursue Jesus over sin, to withstand temptation (both within and outside influences), and to multiply our gratitude and thankfulness toward God's goodness.
3. Repentance: surrendering to God and putting to death our sinful desires. This is in essence a resolution to obey practiced in the community of the church and world.

\*My most painful exposure leads to my most fruitful faith if I'm willing to turn on my comfort and adjust myself to the light.

#### B. My mission

1. While I become more adjusted to the light (become more like Jesus) I assist others.
2. How? That love from John 3:16-21
  - a. Patient, kind, and honest
  - b. This will be costly because it is painful to be exposed to the light. But everything is at stake—so much so that God sacrificed His only Son for it.