

“Love-Light”
1 John 1:1-7; 2:7-11
April 11, 2021
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In 1985, Tom Bodett was a small time author and actor working in construction.

His big break was from the Motel chain, Motel 6.

For the past 35 years he’s had a steady job as the spokesman for Motel 6.

His famous line was actually an “ad-lib” during one of the first takes for the commercial.

“We’ll leave the light on for you”

Or as millions of people have come to recognize it:

“I’m Tom Bodett for Motel 6, and we’ll leave the light on for you”

The meaning of the expression “I’ll leave the light on for you” seems obvious.

Basically it means, I know you’ll be late, but you’re welcome whenever you get here.

Or maybe something like: “I’ll wait up for you - - sort of”.

But if you look at how the expression has been used in songs, there’s often more to it.

Tom Walker’s song is about overcoming addiction.

Belinda Carlisle’s 1990s song is about needing to find herself.

Recently Maggie Rogers “If you leave the light on, then I’ll leave the light on”

...is all over the airwaves.

If leaving the light on seems like a simple expression of caring...

...it can also be wrapped up in the complexity of love.

For the next six weeks - - the sermons will explore the complexity of love.

The letter of 1 John has a lot to say about love.

It is a short letter - - just a few pages.

It’s at the very end of the New Testament - - just before the book of Revelation.

If you have ever read the Gospel of John - - the letter of 1 John will sound familiar.

Many people over the years have attributed the letter to John.

And if the same person didn't write both - - they might as well have.

There are lots of stylistic similarities.

There are differences too.

One of the differences is - - the letter is a lot shorter and easier to read.

It's basically all about love.

Love - - is how the Bible ends.

Well - - - it is if you leave off the book of Revelation.

Which - - by the way - - was also possibly written by John.

So the theme of the next six weeks is sort of like that Tina Turner song:

“What's love got to do with it”?

Each week there are sub-themes under that main one.

This week the sub-theme is light.

Next week it's “the things of the world”.

Then “children”; fear; friends; and so on...

The main theme and the sub-theme fit together. / So for example:

What's love got to do with - - light?

What's love got to do with - - the things of the world?

What's love got to do with - - children, fear, friends...

Maybe after these six weeks, we will be more ready to embrace love.

Maybe we will have a deeper appreciation for love.

In our culture - - love can be dismissed and misused - - for sure.

As Tina Turner says: “Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken”?

When we look at the theme for this morning - - love and light - - it’s same thing.

The phrase “love and light” has been connected with the wellness community and the New Age movement. / People who take that approach to spirituality sometimes use the phrase, “love and light” in the same way Christians say “thoughts and prayers”. / But as - - at least one blog on the internet by Kendra Syrdal has pointed out - - either phrase can be just a lot of - - you know what. / She writes: “Here’s the thing with love and light and thoughts and prayers - - and all of those well wishes - - they are synonymous with, “I don’t actually care that much about this” - - and come from a place of no substance. / If you really care - - do something about it.

So - - if there IS anything to all that - - then this next six weeks might help.

At least I hope so.

What I plan to do is look at what the Bible says about love.

What we can do about it.

How can 1 John challenge us?

Today the Bible connects LOVE and LIGHT.

Popular culture has done the same.

“Christmas Eve will find me - - where the love-light gleams”

“Love-light” is an expression for the fond look of love in a person’s eyes.

And according to Noel Coward - - and Tina Turner - - it can fade.

But according to 1 John - - that connection might have more to it.

1 John begins with the eyes.

But it is about more than just a look of fondness that is found there.

1 John says that the first followers SAW something - - in Jesus.

“That which we have seen with our eyes...

...was LIFE itself!

Life made manifest - - in Jesus.

Eternal life - - in Jesus.

Connection with God - - in Jesus.

All through this letter John describes what it means to say that God IS love.

But here at the beginning - - God is LIGHT.

So for 1 John - - God is LOVE - - and God is LIGHT.

And the WAY for US - - the way forward is - - to WALK in the LIGHT.

Walk in the love-light!

When we do - - there is confession and forgiveness.

When we do - - there is truth.

When we do - - unrighteousness - - and lies - - are overcome.

There's nothing SECOND HAND about this!

Love - - for 1 John - - is NOT a “second hand emotion” - - but a first hand encounter!

And if we have had this first hand encounter with the LIGHT of God it's undeniable.

If we walk in the love-light it is impossible to hate others.

If we walk in the love-light we won't stumble.

So the challenge is to ask yourself: do you - - ever have HATE in your heart?

When you do - - you are NOT walking in the love-light of God.

That's what 1 John says.

And that - - is a pretty big challenge - - at least it is to me.

But remember - - according to 1 John we have a GUIDE to show us the way.

Jesus is our guide - - to walking in the love-light of God.

The early followers SAW it - - first hand - - with their own eyes.

Notice: both John's Gospel and the letter of 1 John begin with the image of light.

In John's Gospel there is no birth story. / Jesus is never described as a baby nor in a manger - - neither in the presence of shepherds like in Luke - - nor wise-men like in Matthew. Instead, in John there is light. / "In the beginning was the Word - - and in the Word was life - - and that life was LIGHT to everyone."

Can those words about light give us hope?

In a weary world - - will we be found - - where the love-light gleams?

Can we make this more than a dream?

More than a sentimental glimmer?

More than a second hand emotion?

I hope so.

Maybe we can discover something more in our hearts and minds as we read this.

It might surprise us - - how much of a difference it can make.

May Sarton describes the surprise of a couple returning to a light left on like this:

"In the evening we came back

into our yellow room

For a moment taken aback

To find the light left on."

Maybe like this couple she describes - - we have been away for a while.

Away from each other...

Away from God...

She goes on...

“When we came home together...

we found the inside weather.

All of our love - - unended.

The quiet light demanded - - and we gave.

We gave - - in a look - - at yellow walls and open book.

The deepest world we share - - and do not talk about.”

Well maybe - - unlike with this couple - - it's time to talk about love.

And not just talk - - to do.

To walk in the light.

To let love overcome hate.

To confess our sins - - instead of deceiving ourselves.

And to let the love of God in Jesus - - set us free.

Amen