

Sermon Series: TRANSFORMATION

Sermon: Would You Like To Come In For Some Chocolate?

Text: Luke 19:1-10

Discussion Questions:

To get things started today, let's talk a little bit about what we might call the "dark corners" of our world - and of our community. The definition can be broad. Perhaps a "dark corner" is a place where there's oppression or poverty or injustice. Or a place where sin abounds. Perhaps it's simply a place where "people of the light" don't want to be seen - or where "those who walk in darkness" assemble and thrive.

On a grand and obvious scale, we can think of ISIS training grounds - where radicalized Islamic terrorists are filled with hatred and taught to perform obscene acts of evil. Corners don't get any darker than that. But there are also places here in our city - and our state, where followers of Christ label as a dark corner. I was walking in downtown Frederick a couple weeks ago, and there's an "Adult Entertainment/Pornography" store right on one of the main streets. Do you think of this as a "dark corner"? It was interesting to see a young man standing out front and holding a sign with a Bible verse, quietly picketing the store. He obviously considered it a dark corner. What are some places that come to your mind when you think of the dark corners in our world - or in our country?

OK, so what about Chambersburg? What are the dark corners of our city? Why are they dark? Do the people who live or congregate there think of them as dark? Does our modern culture think of them as dark - or just those in the Christian community?

- Is a Bar or Tavern a "dark place"?
- Is a movie theater a "dark place" (of course it's dark in the room - you know what I mean!)? Was it considered a dark place fifty years ago?
- Is a casino a "dark place"?
- Are low-income communities thought of as "dark corners"?
- How about abortion clinics?
- Could a Gay Pride parade be looked at as a "dark corner" marching down the street?
- Others that come to mind?

Examination:

- Read **Luke 19:1-10**.
 - Was Zacchaeus' home considered to be a dark corner in the city of Jericho? Who considered it as such? Do you think the entire city of Jericho (not just the religious leaders) considered it to be the home of a "sinner"?
 - How surprised do you think Zacchaeus was when Jesus invited Himself over for lunch?
 - Zacchaeus obviously went to great lengths to get a look at Jesus as he walked by - perhaps even at the expense of some ridicule or embarrassment. Why do you think he wanted to see Jesus so badly?

- What do you make of the fact that Jesus MADE THE EFFORT – *intentionally* - to GO TO Zacchaeus’ home? Is there something we ought to be learning from this?
 - Jesus declares His overarching purpose for even coming to earth there in verse 10 - to seek and to save the lost. Talk about what Jesus did to SEEK the lost? Where did he go to do it?
 - Is this a purpose and pattern that we (both individually and as a church) ought to emulate? Might this take us to “dark corners” we don’t want to go to?
- Read **Matthew 22:1-14**.
 - What’s the “big idea” of this parable?
 - Who were those originally invited to the banquet?
 - Talk about verse 9 - the street corners. Is there any connection between “street corners” and “dark corners”? Is Jesus still calling us to go to the street corners to gather anyone we can find?
 - What do you make of the “wedding clothes” in verse 11 and 12? What does this mean? Just because you’re invited doesn’t mean you get to stay. What can we glean from this?
- Read **Matthew 25:31-46**.
 - How does this familiar passage relate to our discussion today of “dark corners”?
 - The key phrases in verses 34-36 are, “you gave...”; “you invited...”; “you clothed...”; “you looked after...”; “you came to visit...”. How much *intentionality* did it require for these sheep to do what they did?
 - The “punch line” of this parable is the fact that when the sheep were helping those in need - they were actually helping Jesus Himself. Jesus was that prisoner. Jesus was that unclothed man. Jesus was that stranger. It was Jesus Himself who was residing in that dark corner. How should this motivate us to GO into the dark corners of this world?
 - Do you believe that our eternal destiny - eternal life or eternal punishment - really hangs in the balance in the way we intentionally pursue those in dark corners that can be so very easy to overlook?

Application:

As you drive through Chambersburg (or wherever you live) this week, pay attention to the dark corners. Think about why you consider them to be dark. Think about what your immediate reaction is to them. Is this a place you would ever go? Why or why not? Given what we see from the Gospels, is this a place where Jesus might have gone? What would be the reaction if Jesus went to those places now? What might the reaction be if YOU go to those places? Is there quiet pressure in the Christian community these days to avoid these dark places? What impact does the parable of the sheep and goats have on your thinking with respect to these dark places? Is Jesus calling us to extend the invitation to the wedding feast to those in these places?