

Sunday, March 10, 2024 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
Fourth Sunday in Lent
“Loving the Light”
John 3:14-21

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, invite participants to talk about a time they were in the dark and longed for light. (Perhaps during a power outage at home, on a camping trip, etc.)

John 3:14-21 Context. Early in the story of Jesus’ ministry in the fourth gospel, we encounter the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus. It starts out as a conversation about being “born from above”, and then becomes a statement of Jesus’ mission and the choices we make in response to that mission. Alluding to the story from Numbers 21, Jesus uses it to describe the exaltation of his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension (in Greek, the same word means both “lifted up” and “exalted”).

Read John 3:14-21

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read John 3:14-21 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- The passage we are looking at today, John 3:14-21. is part of a larger passage that starts with 3:1 and centers on Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. Look back at John 3:1. What are we told about Nicodemus? (Who is he? How does he come to Jesus? What are his concerns/questions?)
- Why do you suppose Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night?
- In John 3:14, Jesus says to Nicodemus, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” What is this about Moses lifting a serpent? Look back in the Old Testament at Numbers 21:8-9.
- John 3:16 is probably the best-known verse in the Bible. You might have seen it on a poster held on a street corner or a banner in the end zone of a football game. Is this an effective way of sharing the good news that “God so loved the world that he gave up his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.”? What might be other more effective ways of sharing this good news?

- John 3:17 says, “God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” Why is it so easy to fall into the trap of condemning others? What helps us to be more loving and less condemning?
- Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus concludes with Jesus talking about how some people love darkness, but the light has come into the world. What does it mean to live in the light? What might it mean today to live in darkness? Who in our community might be living in darkness? How might we share the light of God’s love with them?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

O God of light and love, thank you for sending Jesus into the world to show us the extent of your love. May the light of your love shine into the darkest corners of our lives. May we be beacons of your light in this dark world, so that all know they are loved by you.

Amen.

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.