

## **John 18: 1-12 "Exposing and Confronting the Darkness"**

**Read John 12:27-36, 13:21-30, and 14:30.**

1. In Matthew, Mark and Luke the theme of Jesus confronting the powers of darkness is expressed in stories of individual demonic encounters where Jesus exercises authority and casts the demon out giving freedom and new life to those in their grip. There are no such stories in John. John instead invites us to see a different face to the darkness. From these three references to the "ruler of the world" (Satan) what do we learn about the forces of darkness?

*12:27-36 Satan is the one who rules over the world. There is coming a moment of judgement which will break his hold over the earth.*

*This may lead some in the group to struggle – I thought God was sovereign? – how can Satan be ruler of the world? Indeed God is, and there are many different ways that the new testament uses the word "world" – this word for world (Gk. Kosmos) expresses the totality of everything that sets itself against God's will and way for his creation.*

*13:21-30 We see Satan's ultimate goal is to bring about Jesus' death through betrayal.*

*14:30 Satan is about to appear as Jesus is done talking. But Satan will not have the last word.*

**Read John 18: 1-12**

2. Jesus is done talking. It is time, as he said, for Satan to appear. Who appears? From this group of people what do we learn about the forces of darkness and how they impact our world? Where do we see the current faces of darkness in our world?

*Judas – Iscariot – this name links him with a radical nationalistic group of zealots known as the sicarii – named after the distinctive knives they carried. They would use the cover of crowds to sneak up behind Romans and Roman sympathizers and plunge their knives deep and then slink back into the crowd. Their desire was to rid Israel of the Romans. Did Judas see in Jesus one who had the power, authority, following to bring this about – the betrayal a ruse to force his hand? This does make sense for if it was the money or his death he really wanted he wouldn't have thrown the money back at the priest's feet and hanged himself – in Judas' ideology we find a hellish mix of nationalism, terror, murder, and betrayal. Satan has appeared.*

*Romans – the current face of oppression – destroyed cultures – left a trail of blood across continents – glorified violence in gladiatorial contest. Jesus has just ridden into Jerusalem greeted with shouts of Hosanna and waving of palm branches. This is how the city had greeted it's liberator 200 years ago when Judas Maccabeus conquered the Gk. king. The will of the people for Jesus was clear – we want you to*

*do the same to the Romans. How would Rome respond? – the way they always did – violence. Satan has appeared.*

*Chief priests – their place in the faith and complicity with Rome had served them well – lined their pockets – established their homes in the best parts of town – confirmed them as the cultural elite – they could not have Jesus undermining that authority. Satan has appeared.*

*Pharisees preached a counter kingdom to Jesus' – theirs for the Jews – his for all races, all peoples – theirs for the pure clean righteous – his also for the sinner / tax-collector / prostitutes – theirs earned by the good enough – his by grace for the not good enoughs – Jesus said of them – you go to the ends of the earth to make a convert and make them twice the sons of hell that you are. Satan has appeared.*

*We learn here that the demonic while being individual as we see in the other gospels – they can also inhabit systems, structures, governments, ideologies, companies, etc. If you were to look at the individuals within the aforementioned they are not the monsters we would think they are – not much different than we are. The demonic power inhabiting it makes them more evil than the sum of their parts – making evil more complex and intransigent.*

*Current examples. There could be many. I would expect we would think of some governments – systems of systemic racism – companies that brutalize their workers and the environment to serve the bottom line – etc.*

*It would be important here not to get into a debate where there is a difference in perspective as much as to begin thinking of how the text could be applied to our world, our lives in the subsequent questions.*

3. Jesus exposes the darkness. Jesus answers their question of whom they seek by using the divine name – I am. What do we learn about what lies at the heart of sin from this exposure? How do you respond to this truth?

*What lies at the heart of sin? Enmity with God. The desire to wipe God from existence. To dethrone God and enthrone ourselves. The trample upon and reject his love, his life, his way.*

*With the follow-up question we are striving for a little bit of a further conversation on the topic – if you are able try and personalize it – express (if this is true for you) how the motivation that sits under your sin is to be master and Lord of your own life.*

4. Peter confronts the forces of darkness with violence. In a way Peter represents us – as humanity has bought into the lie of redemptive violence. It is the belief that violence saves, that war brings peace, that might is right. Reflect together on how culturally we live out the myth of redemptive violence.

*We indoctrinate our kids with it – this myth lies at the heart of most cartoons and video games.*

*It forms the basis of much popular culture – how many of our films glorify it.*

*It establishes us in locating evil outside ourselves. As adults we scapegoat – if we lean left politically we blame the right – if we lean right politically we blame the left – when we get into trouble relationally we blame the other – is you not me.*

*Foreign policy of many nations is governed by this myth. We seek to solve our personal problems with it – perhaps not with physical violence but violence with our words (running them down with others, tearing them down to their face), or violence with our looks.*

5. Jesus will confront the darkness by drinking the cup, the cup of God's wrath upon sin. As Romans 1:18-25 tells us the final expression of God's wrath is to give us over to our desires, to give us exactly what we want, which will ultimately consume us. In wrath God gives the forces of darkness exactly what they want at the cross. They do their worst, but they are played out. What does Jesus' resurrection tell us about the ultimate future of the forces of darkness? How does that impact you personally to receive this truth?

*They have no future. It promises a day where the forces of darkness – sin, death, hell, will no longer wreak havoc through creation.*

*The future is a remade creation – where every evil is undone – all wrongs made right.*

*I suspect the impact personally has a lot to do with hope. Not only an ultimate hope, but also the reality that in Jesus that future promise can be made real in the present. Which is a good lead into the final question...*

6. Jesus confronts the darkness ultimately by self-giving love and forgiveness. How does this invite us to a new posture when confronting the darkness of our world? Can you give examples of where you have seen this work?

*We are invited to confront the darkness in the same way with self-giving love and forgiveness.*

*Tim in the sermon explored how the truth and reconciliation commission in South Africa broke the natural pattern of violence, retaliation, and revenge that often happens when an oppressed group is given power over the oppressor. The love and*

*forgiveness aimed for in the commission brought healing to a nation and minimized bloodshed.*

*In personal relationships brokenness can be met with not seeking revenge or retaliation when wronged but instead extending love and forgiveness – I suspect some of the stories you will explore will fit in this area.*