

Episode 55

"Make sure that the light that you think you have is not actually darkness."
- Luke 11.35

I heard a story recently of someone who got really sick and when she was taken to a clinic she was told that whatever she was suffering from couldn't be diagnosed by clinic doctors, and she had to be taken to a nearby hospital. After a few hours with a specialist in one of the world's top hospitals they still couldn't figure out what was wrong with her. They continued to run tests and sent her from specialist to specialist but kept coming up empty. It was like somewhere in the middle of her body there was a pain that would not go away but they didn't know why.

Eventually, the doctors were able to medicate the pain, gave her a bunch of meds, and sent her home. Unfortunately, she was no better than before and was found passed out on the floor and rushed back to the hospital.

Again the family had to face the news that the doctors didn't know what was wrong with her and were no closer to figuring it out. Over the next few days, the level of fear and tension in the hearts of her friends and family reached a breaking point. "This is one of the best hospitals in the world. This is what doctors are meant to do. Why can't you figure out what's wrong with her?!"

Finally, they get to the root of the problem, start giving the proper treatment and medication and she begins to improve rapidly, and with it came a profound sense of relief. Having made the right diagnosis of what was wrong, they were able to administer the treatment that restored her health.

I bring that up today because we are all fully aware that we are in an absolute crisis in our culture, and no one seems to understand what is actually happening below the politics, below the conflict, below the tension tearing us apart. What is wrong with us? We are using sociology and psychology and politics and economics and we are doing everything in our power to try and get to the heart of what is wrong. Having listened to specialist after specialist, we still haven't properly diagnosed the problem, and with it comes the same rising level of fear in our hearts, the same rising level of hopelessness and helplessness. The light that we think we have is actually darkness.

The diagnosis the world is looking for is simply that we are alienated from God.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, addressing the issue of alienation, explains it as "a distinct kind of psychological or social ill, one involving a problematic separation between the self and the other, that properly belong together." What a profound explanation! We cannot stand, we have no hope, and we are left empty because we are being crushed by a problematic separation. When someone "properly belongs together" with God, but lives alienated from his presence, all the things that we thought would empower us, do nothing to change the state of our heart or tend to our inner brokenness and anxiety. The things that are supposed to be so good, end up being empty and meaningless, riddled by an inner life of chaos and isolation.

Jesus came not only to diagnose the problem but to provide the solution. By dying on the cross he paid for our sins, restored us back to the Father, and set us free from the brokenness and barrenness that held us bound. Though we try and self-medicate, all we do is numb the pain while the symptoms remain, and the light we thought we had, turns out to be darkness.

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