

Third Sunday in Lent – March 15, 2020

Ephesians 5:8-14

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Do you walk around much in the dark? Not many people do because it's not all that safe. In your home you may be able to make your way around in the dark pretty well because you know the lay out and where things are. But if something gets left out or is out of place, you will feel it for days after with the bumps or bruises that can happen. If you're at someone else's house or in a hotel room, walking around in the dark is even less of a good idea when you are unfamiliar with the territory. Walking around outside at night is even more dangerous. You cannot know what you'll step on or trip over, you don't know what holes might be around. Even on a moonlit night, you have to be extra careful to watch where you are walking. Walking around is the idea that is used in our text in verse 8. When it says “live as children of light” it is the idea of walking around as a child of light, not just out on a hike, but in how we live our daily lives. This morning we will take Paul's encouragement to heart and see what it means to **Live as Children of Light**.

Verse 8 begins: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” Darkness and light is a common theme in the Bible for our relationship with God. But did you catch what is unique about this verse? It says you *were* darkness and you *are* light. We might normally think of being *in* darkness and *in* the light, not that we were actually the darkness and now are the light. So what does it mean that we were once darkness? There are different kinds of darkness that we often talk about. There is physical darkness which is the absence of light. This darkness often can bring fear, not just in little children, because we cannot see what is around us. Then there is mental darkness when we say that someone is in the dark because there is a lack of understanding, they don't know what is going on. When it comes to spiritual darkness there is an element of both. There is a fear of not knowing what is out there, of what is going to happen next. There is also a lack of understanding as no one by nature knows anything about God or his plan for their life. But spiritual darkness goes beyond that too. There is the darkness of sin—everyone is born with a sinful nature that only wants to do sinful things. Being darkness means being an instrument of darkness, a tool of darkness. It means bringing darkness wherever one goes. It's like the dark cloud on the horizon that warns of the terrible storm that is coming.

The fact that we were all once darkness makes the change to being light in the Lord all the more remarkable. Darkness cannot just become light. Those who are lost in the fear and ignorance and sin of darkness do not just one day decide to make a change for the better. The quote in verse 14 that is possibly from an early Christian hymn describes the change that is needed: ““Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Changing from

darkness to light is no different than changing from death to life. No dead people can make themselves alive. This is only possible through Christ. Being light is the result of having faith in Jesus as one's Savior. This can happen at one's baptism, particularly in little children as they are made a child of God. It can happen through the preaching of the gospel as the good news of Jesus is shared and the Holy Spirit leads someone to believe in the good news. Being light means no more darkness of fear. There is no fear of death or hell because Jesus has won heaven for us. There is no more darkness of ignorance when it comes to the way to heaven or God's will for our lives because Jesus has shown us the way is through him and given us the path to follow. There is no more darkness of sin as we now have a new self to battle our old self through the strength that God provides. We are light, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because of Jesus and who he is and what he has done for us.

As light, this text goes on to encourage us to shine our light, to live as children of light. Verses 9 & 10: "(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord." Using another illustration common to Scripture, as light we are encouraged to produce fruit with three specific things listed—goodness, righteousness and truth. Goodness is the opposite of evil and being an instrument of darkness. Righteousness is not something we can achieve on our own, but is a gift of God, through him we are righteous. While truth is relative in our world, God's truth is clear. These three fruits connect to verse 10 and finding out what pleases the Lord. It's not that we don't know what God wants, that we have to struggle to discover God's secrets. He lays everything out that we need in his Word and we simply compare our fruit to the standards that he has set.

Sadly not all of our fruit is good. Verses 11 & 12: "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." We all still have a sinful nature that will want us to engage in the deeds of darkness. Darkness and sin go together because it is natural to want to hide sins, it is shameful to speak of them. This could cover any number of different areas, but for application we'll take our lead from the verses right before our text. A number of sinful behaviors are mentioned, but sixth commandment sins, sins against God's gifts of marriage and sex, fit the description as shameful deeds of darkness. There are any number of sins in this area we could list under the broad topic of adultery: cheating on one's spouse, sex before marriage, divorce, homosexuality, living together outside of marriage, pornography in wide variety of media forms, lust in our hearts and the list of specifics could go on. Our culture today, as it was in Paul's day, is all about promoting such sins and bringing them into the light to make them seem acceptable.

Instead we are to expose them as fruitless deeds of darkness. When compared to the three fruits mentioned before, there is nothing good that comes from any of these sins. They bring harm to home and families, harm to personal relationships, harm to how we perceive and interact with the opposite gender. Being righteous means treating marriage as God intended it when it was created in the perfection of creation and reserving the gift of sex only for that relationship between husband and wife. The truth on these matters is not what we think or feel or what our society thinks or feels, but what God says in his Word. These are not rules that God set up to limit us or harm us, but to help us and bless our human relationships.

As children of light, we will live as light in this area too. Will we make mistakes and continue to break the 6th commandment? Will we continue to have sinful thoughts that are there

whether we want them or not? Yes, we will. But rather than excuse them or be okay with them or even validate them, we will turn to the Lord in repentance and receive forgiveness for these sins too. We will live as children of light in a world that is becoming increasingly dark, living out the example that God intends, with the strength that only he can provide.

Verses 13 & 14: “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.” When we live as children of light, other people’s deeds of darkness will be exposed and visible by comparison. Our purpose is not just to be judgmental because we think we’re better than others caught in these sins. No our goal is in the quote again from verse 14: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” We want others to go from darkness to light. Whether they have never heard about Jesus and have always been in the dark, or whether they were light at one time and their light has dimmed as they have strayed, we want them to wake up so that Christ will shine on them. A life of darkness will lead to death in hell. But a life of light will lead to eternity in heaven. This is our goal in exposing deeds of darkness, so that they too can live as children of light.

Walking around in the dark is rarely a good idea. Turning on the light or having some kind of flashlight makes all the difference to being safe and not getting hurt. The same is true spiritually. We were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. And so we walk around, we live, as children of light. We expose our own deeds of darkness and ask forgiveness for the times that we fail. We strive to produce fruit of the light with the goodness, righteousness and truth that only our God can provide. We thank God for waking us up from the dead and ask him to continue shining his light on us as his children. Amen.