

***Ephesians 5:8-14. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> 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."***

***Live as children of the Light.***

***1. Recognize the change that God has made in you.***

***2. Recognize what pleases and displeases the Lord.***

Last week we talked extensively about the fact that faith is a gift of God. It is a miracle. In his love God rescues those who were lost and dead in sin and he gives us life. In our readings for today the common illustration for faith is that of sight. In his goodness God has opened our eyes of faith through word and Sacrament. He has taken away our spiritual blindness. He has brought us out of the darkness of sin and unbelief, death and hell, and has brought us into his wonderful light.

It's a remarkable thing. It is nothing short of miracle that we are sitting here today and we know and believe and trust who God is and what he has done for us because by nature we were all born spiritually blind. The Bible says that the man without the Spirit is spiritually discerned, but with the gift of the Spirit we can see with the eyes of faith. As the familiar spiritual song says, Amazing grace, how sweet the sound... I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. Now let's take a few moments to see, to realize, to recognize, what this means for you and for me.

Everyone is born with a natural knowledge of right and wrong. There is also a general sense of a creator given to all people. Only the fool looks around at the wonderful creation, looks at the complicated structure of the human anatomy, the immensity and complexity and the beauty of the heavens and the earth; only a fool or a person with a heart darkened and hardened by unbelief looks at all of this and says there is no God. We were born with a general sense of right and wrong and a general sense of God, but that is certainly not the same as spiritual sight; for we could not even recognize who the true God was. Before we received the gift of the Holy Spirit, before we received the gift of faith, we could not see spiritually. But we were lost. We were not only in the darkness, but we were darkness.

But then God in his mercy reached out to us and touched us and gave us spiritual sight. He didn't put a paste of mud and spit on our eyes and tell us to go and wash us

in the pool of Siloam, but with similar simple means he performed a miracle for us. With a few scoops of simple water connected his powerful word he washed us and cleansed us and made us his own through Baptism. He gave us his holy Word. We heard it, we read it, and working through this simple means the Holy Spirit produced and strengthened faith within us. And now by this miracle of faith we can see spiritually. Now we recognize Jesus as the Son of God. We worship him as Lord. We know that he is our Savior from sin. We understand and believe that we have been made right with God through his perfect sacrifice. We are sure of his gift of heaven that is waiting for us who believe.

What a blessed gift this is! By faith we know who the true God is. We can see his love for us in Christ Jesus. We are rescued from the darkness of unbelief. We are snatched from the eternal pit of hell. We are brought by his grace from darkness into light. But now what?

Throughout the book of Ephesians Paul stresses this tremendous change of faith, but then challenges the Ephesians to consider what this transformation of faith means for their daily lives. You were dead in your transgressions and sins, but now you are alive in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:5). You were excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, but now those who were far away have been brought near to God through the blood of Christ. You are citizens of heaven. (Ephesians 2:13). You were once lost in the ignorance of unbelief, you were once darkness, but now you are light. There has been this tremendous change and now Paul wants the Ephesians, he wants us to ask. Now what?! How is this gift of faith going to affect our life?

The truth is that this changes everything. I am no longer spiritually dead, but I can live for Christ. We are no longer separated from our God but we are brought near and made citizens of heaven so I am going to serve my God and heavenly king. I am no longer lost in the darkness of sin and unbelief, but I am in the light of Christ.

Paul urges us to see how incredible and thorough this change is and therefore, he doesn't just say that we were brought out of the darkness, but rather he wants us to find our entire identity in Christ. ***"You were once darkness, but now you are light."*** This is who we are now. We have Christ. We have this gift of faith. We have been changed in this remarkable way. And now Paul implores us to live as children of light in the darkness of this world!

As children of light we now have spiritual sight. We are no longer lost in the ignorance of unbelief and stumbling through life without direction or purpose or hope. Though God's Word I can see who God is, what he has done to save me, and I can also see God's good and perfect will for my life. And now that I have been made his child I will want to know what the father says. I will want to see and follow and keep the commands that my king has laid out for me. Paul writes, ***(the fruit of the light***

***consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)*** <sup>10</sup> ***and find out what pleases the Lord.*** This is part of being in the light. We are to live for Christ and imitate his goodness, rejoice in his righteousness and to acknowledge his truth. Out of thanks to Christ our Savior we are to resist that which is evil and cling to what is good, and right, and true.

As children of the light a fruit of faith that naturally comes forth is that we are eager to know the Scriptures and we are willing to find out and consider what pleases the Lord. And so we come to here to hear God's Word explained and applied to our lives. We read it. We study it. We read our Mediations and daily devotions. We go to Bible class. We might even consider taking a bible instruction class again. Think about the last time that you took formal instruction on basic bible teaching. For most of you it was probably a very long time ago. Even for a person who person in his 30's being 14 years old and in Catechism was a long time ago. We need to keep sharp. We need to examine God's Word and apply it to our life. Because after years of hearing the opinions of the world and sorting through the beliefs of often well meaning but misleading friends and neighbors, our knowledge of God's Word and our understanding of God's will can become clouded. Our spiritual sight can become blurred. As children of the light living in this world of darkness there is a need for us to continually search the scriptures so that we might be reminded of what Christ has done, and find out what God's Word has to say and then apply it to our lives.

But there is a part of us that doesn't like this much. We cringe and we wriggle and squirm in this light. A part of us kind of likes the shady middle between the light and the darkness. A part of us likes to try to make the claim that we are in the light, while still holding on to a desire to cling to the darkness of ignorance so that we can keep on doing the things that please us, but don't necessarily please God.

Paul's words, however, make it clear that part of living as children of the light means that we find out what pleases God and then we do it. We are to do what pleases the Lord and we are to resist that which displeases him. We are to look at God's Word and apply it to our life; even when that exposes something unpleasant.

A Christian man wants to fit in with his coworkers so he doesn't think it's a big deal if he tells a few dirty jokes and curses and swears and takes God's name in vain so he ignores and avoids God's commands. He just tries to keep it clean on Sundays. A young woman wants to keep going out with her friends and getting drunk so she ignores, avoids, or conveniently forgets, God's warnings against drunkenness. A Christian couple might think it is just fine to move in together because after all God put this person in my life; a married man who is constantly arguing with his wife supposes that God will be okay with me getting a divorce because God wants me to be happy. It might seem like a good idea for Christian parents to sign their son up for the boy scouts because, after all, they do teach something about God and my friends and neighbors send their boys. This is certainly not the way that God wants us to think and act. But

rather God has called us into his light he has given us spiritual sight so that we may avoid what is displeasing to the Lord and instead we do what pleases him.

This is part of living as a child of the light. We should not God's commands, but we are to expose and to repent of those things which are in our lives that are not according to his will. We are children of the light; and so we are no longer ignorant of Father's will but we are connected to it. The same word that tells us about our Savior Jesus Christ and how he lived and died for us is the same word that shows us, that tells us, how God wants us to live. And so we don't claim ignorance, or avoid his word, or conveniently forget his commands, or make questionable decisions based on gut feelings and what *we think* God wants for our life. Instead we examine God's Word to see what he truly says about how we are to live.

And God's Word clearly tells us that we should refrain from cursing and coarse joking. God's Word tells us avoid drunkenness. God pleads with us in his Word that marriage should be honored by all, by the married and unmarried. God tells us clearly that he hates divorce. God warns us more than once in his Word that we are to watch out for and keep away from those who promote false teachings. Here in Ephesians chapter 4 and 5 God gives us more than a few specific instructions on how we are to live as children of the light.

This is not God simply shining a flashlight into our eyes and making sure that we he catches us in the act or that we are staying on task. But this is our God showing us how we are to live because through faith in Christ we are a new creation. ***We were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord.*** In Christ we have been forgiven for all the times that we have failed to live as children of the light. From the sins of ignorance, to the sins of poor judgment, to the sins which are even too shameful to mention; we are forgiven in Christ. In love he cleanses us so that we are renewed to live in joyful service to him. God strengthens and nourishes our faith so that we may see that we are transformed through faith in Jesus, a new day has dawned, and Christ shines on us. Like the ancient hymn said, ***"Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."***

What a blessed gift this is! By faith we know who the true God is. We can see his love for us in Christ Jesus. We are rescued from the darkness of unbelief. We are snatched from the eternal pit of hell. We are redeemed and made new. We no longer live for ourselves in the darkness of unbelief and an empty way of life, but we live for Christ who died for us and was raised again. With eyes open, with God's salvation in our hearts, and his will before our eyes, we live with renewed purpose and with a clear path laid before us. We live to give God the glory. He has brought us to faith. Christ Jesus has cleansed us from our sin and He has given us spiritual sight. He has made us children of the light. Let us have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but let us live as children of the Light! Amen.