

March 26, 2017
Sermon for the Fourth Sunday in Lent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Ephesians 5:8–14

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Ephesians 5:8–14 (ESV)

⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The world can be a dark place, filled with people in need of the light of Christ.

At home, turning on the light is an easy thing; none of us is afraid to flip a switch. But talk about going out and being a light to the world for Christ, and we might shrink back a little bit.

We know we're not supposed to hide "this little Gospel light of mine" under a bushel, but speak it to our friends or neighbors? Maybe I'd rather hide myself!

I wonder if sometimes we can make evangelism too complicated, as though it's something we're not qualified to do.

The truth is that you are qualified, because you yourselves are children of light!

And that makes us highly qualified, then, Christ sends us, as children of Light, to shine His Light on those trapped in darkness.

God has made us to walk as children of light.

We were once darkness (v 8a). As St. Paul mentioned earlier, "*You were dead in the trespasses and sins, . . . having no hope and without God in the world*" (Eph 2:1, 12).

But we've been made children of light through baptism. Through the washing of rebirth and regeneration at our baptism that darkness, our sins, have been washed away.

We are now light in the Lord (v 8b). This is a change of nature, accomplished by Christ when He became sin for us going to the cross, that "*in him we might become the righteousness of God*" (2 Cor 5:21).

When we who have been called to faith live in the salvation of the cross, we are light in the world. Think about the hymn we sometimes sing just prior to baptisms."Here we bring a child of nature; Home we take a newborn creature, Now God's precious son or daughter, Born again by Word and water."

We bring and God changes!

Even if we bring ourselves as an adult for baptism, we are still following Christ's command and the Holy Spirit is doing the work!

Therefore, we are called to walk as children of light (v 8c). Walking in that light is a gift from God also because we still want to step off into the darkness. We are called to seek out "*all that is good and right and true*" (v 9).

Our new life in Christ is a lively, active thing. We should "*try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*" (v.10). This is what is known as the third use of the Law.

As dearly loved children of God, we seek to learn and do what pleases our heavenly Father.

It's now something we actually can do, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and it has a purpose. That is, Christ then sends us to shine His light in dark places.

It is a risky endeavor. As Paul warns us, "*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness*". The temptation is there and we need to avoid being drawn in (v 11).

There are hazards in the dark. Sin is seductive, and compromise is a very real danger (see Gal 6:1). "*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*"

There are numerous cases of drowning people taking down their rescuers in a panic. Lifeguards are trained to avoid that and still save the swimmer. When we help someone who is struggling in a particular sin, we should never think that we are above temptation. We could easily fall into the same struggle and go down with the person we are trying to help.

We should also avoid shaming others when we speak (v 12). I know it's easy to do, and sometimes even seems fun. But it is not right. Our purpose is not to point out how bad people are—to expose them for all to see. What we are about is rescue—shining Christ on those trapped in darkness.

We should shine like a lighthouse. Shining the light of Christ to others that are seeking the light!

We can help mark the dangerous shoals, especially if it is a place that we have “shipwrecked” ourselves in the past. Sometimes a rebuke or correction is necessary but never for its own sake. We don’t do it to make fun of a person but strictly to warn of the danger that lies in the darkness. We can mark the entrance to safety...showing someone the light of Christ!

As “light in the Lord,” by our words and deeds (however weak), we point the way to their safe harbor.

I ran across a little story called “Lighting the Way”

In the third century BC, the inhabitants of Alexandria, Egypt, had a problem. First, ships kept missing their harbor. The coastline of Egypt was rather flat, with no significant landmarks to say to ship navigators, “Here’s Alexandria.” Second, sailing along the Egyptian coast was quite hazardous, with numerous sandbars lying unseen just beneath the waves. To solve both problems, Egypt’s ruler, Ptolemy Soter, had an enormous lighthouse constructed—the Pharos lighthouse of Alexandria—which would go on to be recognized as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. By day, sunlight would reflect off its white marble exterior and the mirror at its pinnacle, and a large bonfire would be kept lit at its top during the night. It’s said that light from the Pharos lighthouse could be seen for nearly thirty miles out to sea—an amazing feat in its time—warning sailors of danger and pointing the way to the grand and safe harbor of Alexandria.

Every Christian is like that lighthouse, shining the light of Christ both day and night to all in range (Eph 5:8). Christ’s light warns of danger lurking beneath the surface, to be sure, but more important, it points the way to our King’s safe harbor.

The result is that sleepers, trapped in darkness, rise from the dead (vv 13–14).

We’ll have both successes and failures. Not everyone wants to come into the light of Christ.

Some are transformed from darkness to light (v 14a). The Holy Spirit calls upon their heart and they don't deny Him entry. There are successes—such as the Ephesians in our Text as well as you and I. And some will be transformed by the light shining through us.

Sadly though, some will stay in the dark. The Holy Spirit calls upon their heart and they harden their heart. We know there are and will be failures—but not all came to faith in Jesus or Paul's day either. Some do and will refuse to see Christ's light shining through us. But let us keep the right perspective. The "risings" are Son-powered resurrections (v 14b). As Verse 14 says, "*Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*" The light of Christ calls out and it is Christ who does the shining and giving of life. He is "*the light of the world,*" after all (Jn 9:5). And the failures are a rejection of Christ, not of us (Jn 9:39, 41).

It is sad when the light of Life is rejected but we have done what has been asked. As children of light, we are just lamps on stands (Mt 5:14–16).

Christ has filled us with His light and placed us where **He** can be seen.

We may not always be happy where we are. We may not like our current job, or even where you are at in school. Be it grade school, high school or college. But God has you in a certain place for a reason. Bloom where you have been planted...

Another little short story in closing: As many of you know, I served for four years in the USAF. It was during peacetime and they really weren't moving anyone around very much so I spent all four years at Dyess AFB in Abilene, TX. I did not really enjoy my duty there but I learned a lot and I made some good friends.

With the advent of Facebook I have been able to get reacquainted with several of those old friends. When I share with them that I am now a pastor, none have ever been surprised. They saw and acknowledged my faith in Christ even when I didn't think I was showing it, even when I was having the growing pains that many of us have when we first leave home.

They saw the light of Christ in me even when that light was dim because I was struggling. I am still amazed how they saw Christ's light through me, even when I didn't see it in myself. My point is, you never know how and when Christ is using you for the furtherance of his kingdom.

God uses you too, even though you may never know it this side of heaven. In your trials, in your struggles, strive to do what is right. Not because you want to earn your salvation anything or anything else but only in response for what Christ has for you. And the greatest thing is, there is no training required. You live your life and let Jesus shine through you!

Continue to shine Christ in dark places and watch what Christ can do!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

Sermon Outline

Christ sends us to shine His light on those trapped in darkness.

Ephesians 5:8-14

- I. God has made us to walk as children of light.
- II. Christ sends us to shine His light in dark places.
- III. Sleepers, trapped in darkness are called to "...*arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*" (Vs. 13-14)