

August 19, 2018
Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Ephesians 5:6–21

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Ephesians 5:6–21 (ESV)

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; 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.” ¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

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

Amen.

If you're a teacher, perhaps you already know this. Educators have done studies on how children spend their days at school—how many minutes spent reading at their desks, how many minutes spent going to the restroom or the drinking fountain, how many minutes sharpening their pencils, and so on.

Down to the minute. Down to a science. Blocks of time devoted to all the sorts of things you'd expect children to do in school. Plus at least one activity we might not expect: "walking with no purpose."

That's right: "walking with no purpose." This was one of the activities in this particular study. In a normal day, an average child will spend a certain number of minutes simply walking from here to there for no good reason. Interesting. In all truth, this study could have easily been describing part of my days in public school.

However this may apply to us as Christians too. We are children of God, and our lives as Christians are often described as a walk, as Paul does in our text today, our Epistle from Ephesians 5. And this brings about the question: Are we walking with no purpose?

If our walk has a purpose, it's because of what Christ Jesus has made us as God's children.

Paul urges us in our Text to walk as Children of Light; to walk with a Purpose.

The fact is it's not just schoolchildren who walk with no purpose. People of all ages, seem to spend their lives walking through life not knowing what it's really all about. In our Text, Paul calls this darkness. "*For at one time, you were darkness*" (v 8a).

We live in a world still entangled and deceived and enslaved, by sin.

For as many ways as people have tried to redefine it, excuse it, redecorate, or hide it, the fact is sin is at the bottom of what makes life and relationships difficult, breakable, sick, and dying. That's "darkness," and the hiding or denial of it is a "deception" and "empty words."

"Empty words," have no purpose. While there are many types of deception, empty or false words, the "things" that Paul has been talking about are in the realm of sexual vices, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking that are common in the world around us. So common, but they serve no purpose.

Such purposeless walking began, of course, with that original deception, the lie that eating of the tree God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat would open their eyes to be like God. This sort of "enlightenment," however, was actually one that blinded all people so that we cannot see God. Immediately sin had its effect of separation, separation from God, from his creation, and from other human beings.

So that we might know the truth about sin, God gave His Law. The Ten Commandments reveal that because of sin we become idolaters.

We count other things as more important than the one true God. Because of sin, we use God's name to condemn others or justify ourselves. It suits our needs while condemning others. Because of sin, we ignore, even despise, God's Word and do not worship Him. Because of sin, our relationships with others—mother and father, wife and husband, enemies and friends, co-workers and strangers—all these are disrupted and destroyed.

And none of these actions serves any meaningful purpose. Paul says, "*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them*" (v 11).

"Unfruitful works." No purpose." Walking through the motions of life with no more purpose than to waste the night and wake up with regrets. But that is the way many people walk. And all this may be the way we spend a certain number of minutes of our day or our lives.

It's all because by nature, we're children of darkness; we're in the dark about God and His relationship to us. Now, our fallen nature recognizes sin; most people understand that all this might be a dead-end street. But our own nature is helpless to do anything about it.

So, like Adam and Eve, the best it seems we can do is try to cover up.

Because of the slavery of sin and our inability to free ourselves, God in His mercy is determined to save us. His mercy shines like a beacon of light, of hope, as right off the bat when He promised to Adam and Eve a Savior from sin (Gen 3:15).

This light of salvation burned as hope in God's people through the centuries until that light exploded like a supernova over Bethlehem when "*the Word became flesh*" (Jn 1:14).

And later on when Light and darkness, Good and evil, fought on the cross, it seemed that darkness was winning and putting out the Light of salvation. But because that Light, Jesus, was stronger than the darkness, sin and death were defeated and Christ rose again, victorious!

Jesus told His followers, "*You are the light of the world*" (Mt 5:14). And by our Baptism into Christ, He speaks to us too! He lives in us, enlightening our hearts, awakening us to be able to walk in newness of life. So that Paul is able to say in our Text, "*Now you are light in the Lord . . . as children of light*" (v 8).

Suddenly, we can see things in a whole new way. We see God for who He really is: not distant, way up in heaven, disinterested in or irrelevant to our lives, but here, present, eager to have a relationship with each one of us.

That's what Jesus lets us see in His light. God is not angry and keeping score on how well we keep His Commandments, but forgiving, not counting our sins against us, because Jesus took them upon Himself on the cross.

That's what we see as children of light. And we also see our world differently in this new light. Paul tells us to "*try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord*" (v 10). The apostle John, in his First Epistle, says the same, telling us, "*Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God*" (4:1).

If we pay attention, looking with the eyes of Christ, we can identify those ways and words and temptations that are against the Spirit, not in the way of life, we are to “*take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness*” (v 11). We reject them, and walk away.

But even then, even in children of the light, trying to do what is right, the darkness of sin will be exposed. When it is exposed in us, we return to the promise of our Baptism in daily repentance and faith. We acknowledge our sin, we repent and strive to sin no more. And when sin is exposed around us or in others, then is the opportunity to extend the same forgiveness and salvation we ourselves have received from God. This is when the opportunity arises to let your light shine and give that inviting, saving light to all around (Mt 5:15).

As children of light, we now have a purpose. Yes, we walk with purpose. “*Walk as children of light,*” and “*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil*” (vv 8b, 15–16).

So as we walk in the light, we don't keep it to ourselves. As Paul says in our Text, “*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vv 19–20).

Walking in the light of Christ is to walk as children of God with purpose. It's the walk of repentance and faith. We live in the forgiveness of all our deeds done in darkness, with no wholesome purpose, and we invite the world to the glorious light of salvation in Jesus Christ.

We walk as forgiven children of God. As children of the light. Not because we are without sin, but as forgiven children the light of Christ shines through us. And we walk not to condemn others but to allow the light of Christ to call them to repentance also.

Amen.

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

Amen.

S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria

To God alone be glory

Walk with a Purpose as Children of Light

Ephesians 5:6–21

1. Often, God's children spend time walking with no purpose.
2. Jesus has made us children of light, the light of the world.
3. As a child of light, our walk has a purpose.