

Third Sunday in Lent – March 23, 2014
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Ephesians 5:8-14 (NIV)

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."

Dear friends in Christ:

I'm guessing we've all experienced a power failure – at one time or another. We've scrambled to find candles and flash lights – in an effort to at least restore some light. It's hard to do anything constructive without light, isn't it? In fact, if we try to do things in the dark we end up making a mess of things.

That's not only true about our lives in this world it's also true about our spiritual lives. The person who lives in spiritual darkness is unable to do anything constructive. In fact that person ends up making a mess of things.

Thankfully you and I don't have to live in darkness. We can live as children of the light because the Lord has chased away the darkness as Paul reminds us in our text for today.

Although we have been called to faith in Christ by the Gospel and now live in the light of God's forgiving grace that wasn't always the case. We were born in the darkness of sin. And even now we still have a sinful nature which loves to return to the darkness. Like the Ephesians we were at one time spiritually dead – they were ignorant of divine truth. Their spiritual darkness led them into acts of ungodliness and immorality and the accompanying misery that resulted from their separation from God and from living under his wrath. They were a people whose darkness was evident in their lives. And they also encouraged others to join them in their activities. They were darkness.

Sadly because of our sinful natures we often have a tendency to do things which are contrary to God's will – those deeds may even be so embarrassing and shameful that we do them in secret – under cover of darkness so no one else will find out. Of course God knows even our secret sins and the light of his law we can also see just how empty, meaningless and destructive those deeds are.

Thankfully we don't have to live in the darkness of sin – separated from God and his love. The Lord Jesus has chased away the darkness – you are no longer darkness – you are light.

Darkness brings insecurity and ignorance. Light makes all things visible. When we enter our homes late at night we slowly grope for a light switch. We don't want to run into an unseen object. Once the light is on, we're much more comfortable and we can move freely about our home.

Just as a light in our homes enables us to see what is around us so the light of the Gospel allows us to see the blessings of God. The Holy Spirit has used the Gospel to enlighten our hearts. He has shown us the light of the world – Jesus and has brought us to faith in him. He has led us to see our sins, to understand our depravity. He has revealed our need for forgiveness and he has pointed us to the only true source of forgiveness. As a light shining in a dark place the Spirit has used the Word of God as a bright torch to direct us to the way of truth.

The light of God's word is brilliant. It penetrates the deepest darkness and exposes the works of darkness. It reveals priceless treasures which could never have been found in the dark. The Word gives direction. It serves as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

If you were outside in the dark and needed to go somewhere you'd appreciate having a flashlight to show you where to walk so you wouldn't trip on rocks or tree roots. That would be light for your feet. But it might also be helpful to have a light for your path – maybe a light on a post or on the building that you wanted to go to – that would be a light for your path.

God's word shows us exactly where to go and where not to go and it shows us where we are going and it shows us how to get there.

The Lord Jesus chased away the darkness of sin by living a perfect life for us. The Lord Jesus chased away the darkness of God's wrath by suffering our punishment on the cross. While darkness covered the earth on Good Friday Jesus was abandoned by his Father to experience the eternal punishment of hell for our sins. Jesus chased away the darkness by declaring it is finished and commending his spirit to his Father's keeping. The Lord Jesus chased away the darkness of death by defeating it with his resurrection.

Through faith in Jesus we are now children of the light. We no longer need to live in darkness instead we can live in the light. "Living in the light" means following the light of God's word – letting that word serve to direct our thoughts, words and actions. It means reflecting the love of Jesus in our lives. As Paul says in our text – **the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.**

Lives that are filled with the fruit of goodness will reflect honesty, morality, kindness and love. Lives that are filled with the fruit of righteousness will be filled with actions and deeds which are right in God's eyes. Lives that are filled with the fruit of truth will be guided by God's absolute truths. As a plant seeks light and turns to it so a child of the light will look to the light of God's word for answers and for truths which we can rely on.

Those truths will enable us to find out what is pleasing to the Lord and to put our stamp of approval on it. When we live in the light will not only seek to support, encourage and do those things that are pleasing to God but we will also take a stand against those things that do not please him – we will in the words of our text have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness but will seek to expose them.

Notice that our text describes the deeds of darkness as fruitless. Surely if a farmer had a field that didn't produce any crops he wouldn't spend time in that field at the harvest time. He'd abandon that field and spend his time in the one which produced a harvest. In the same way we will have nothing to do with the sinful, dark deeds which are in conflict with God's will and truth. We will allow the light to expose them for what they are a spiritual cancer of which we want no part.

As we live in the light we will express our concern for those who are lost in the darkness of sin. Paul calls out to those who are still in the darkness of sin and says, **"Wake, O Sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."** Just as the sun gives light to men so Christ pours out his truth on those who are asleep calling them into his light – as we share with them the wonderful truths of God's word.

The Lord has chased away the darkness for us. We no longer have to live in darkness – we no longer want to live in darkness. We can live as children of the light and we want to live as children of the light because of everything that the Lord has done for us. Our lives will reflect God's good and gracious will. Our lives will shine with the light which is ours in Christ. Jesus explains:

(Matthew 5:14-16) "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15) Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16) In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

So turn on the lights – let your lives shine brightly giving glory to God.

The Lord has chased away the darkness. We no longer have to live in the darkness we can live as children of the light. Amen.