

March 27, 2011
Lent 3

"You Live Each Day in the Light of the Son"

EPHESIANS 5:8-14

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."*

After a week of rainy weather it is sure good to see the sun shining brightly this morning. This past week I was reading a portion of the book "Two Years before the Mast." Richard Henry Dana describes what it was like to spend two years on a ship that went from Boston to California and then back to Boston in the 1840's. Those were the days before the Panama Canal so that meant going around the Straights of Magellan in South America. In the book he describes how it took weeks to get around the tip of South America, the danger of icebergs, dark days and nights, cold rain and snow, freezing temperatures. Finally they made it around and started going north and the sun came out. In vivid detail he describes what it was like to feel the warmth of the sun after weeks of shivering in the cold and even wearing wet clothes in the freezing temperatures.

Today we want to speak to you about living in the light of the Son, not sun spelled s-u-n, but Son, S-O-N, God's Son, Jesus our Savior. You see dear Christian, the love of God's Son, Jesus your Savior, is a constant in your life that never changes. The love that led Jesus to give his life for you on the cross and forgive you of your sin brings you into this amazing position where your heavenly Father loves you hour by hour and minute by minute, twenty four seven. As we sang in the verse, "What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, O my soul. That led the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul." We are so amazed at this love because we know in our heart of hearts that we have not deserved it.

You are in the light of God's Son

The Apostle Paul loved to remind people to that they were taken out of darkness and brought by God's grace into the light of God's love through Jesus their Savior. "For you were once darkness, but not you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light." The light of God's love came to the Christians in Ephesus while they were living in darkness and unbelief. In Acts 19 we hear how this light came to these people living in darkness. It says that Paul had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of

the Lord. By sharing God's Word with people, the Lord opened the eyes of people to see things about the true God that they had never known before.

The book of Acts tells about the darkness that once existed in these people. They worshipped gods with names like Zeus, and Mars, and Venus. Their favorite goddess was Diana for whom they had erected a large statue at the famous harbor in Ephesus. These people were caught up in the occult. When they came to the light they gave up their witchcraft and sorcery. It says in Acts 19, "Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas." The note in my Bible says that a drachma is equivalent to a day's wage. Let's say that have a job that earns \$15 per hour. That would be 7 million dollars. When the light of God's love enters the world of darkness it changes the lives of people.

This past week I was also reading from Luther's *Large Catechism*. The portion I read was from the 1st commandment where he talks about people who live in the darkness of believing in false gods. He said of people, "You can easily sense how the world practices only false worship and idolatry. For no people have ever been so corrupt that they did not begin and continue in some divine worship. Everyone has set up his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort." It has been said that this current age in which we live is very religious, but people want God on their own terms. They want to live in the darkness of their own gods and their own belief system. They especially want to live in the darkness where their good works in the community will outweigh their sins and make them acceptable to God. Have you heard that Elizabeth Taylor died? How many husbands did she have? Yet, I am sure that people believe she is in heaven with angel's wings because of what she did to help people with AIDS.

It is the Lord, speaking through his Word, the Holy Bible, who calls us out darkness and brings us into the light of his love. 1 Peter 2 says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Picture yourself living in a dark room where you cannot see anything and you have no knowledge of what the Lord has done for you to rescue you. That's how I was born into this world and so were you. Listen to this vivid description in Isaiah 59 "Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead."

But now you are in the light of God's Son. The Lord has taken you into a room and turned on a light that let's you see Jesus and all the blessings you have in him. Your eyes see Jesus lying in a manger in Bethlehem and you also believe that he is Lord and God from all eternity. You see him praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will but yours be done." Your eyes see him hanging on the cross, not just with nails in his hands, but with the sins of the whole world placed on him. You see his suffering and death paying for every sin you ever committed. You see him rising from the dead and even keeping the nail prints in his hands. You see him sitting on God's throne taking care of you as shepherd takes care of the sheep. You live every day of your life in this amazing love, this amazing grace, the light of God's love. I was blind but now I see.

You walk in the light of God's Son

Because of what you see, your whole life changes. You walk differently as you interact with people around you. Paul writes, "for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth." You want to do things that are good and right that follow the truth of God's Word. You want to find out what pleases the Lord. The Greek word for "find out" is literally put to the test or examine. One of the great joys of living in the light is to test out the ways of the Lord and discover that God's ways are always the best ways, especially when it comes to our morals and behavior.

When you walk in the light of God's Son you want nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Stay away from things that reflect the world of darkness. The Christians in Ephesus brought their books about sorcery and burned them in the public square. The Christians today hold a remote control in their hands and say, "I am not going to let that darkness come into my living room and into my life." Why is it that so many movies today have so much darkness and immorality? It is because they are coming from a world of people still living in the darkness. Expose the darkness. When someone at work or school starts talking bad about another person, don't join in their darkness. Expose the darkness by saying something good about that person.

Paul says that it is shame to speak about the things that come from this world of darkness. "For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret." Today it is possible for people to carry on a secret life on their internet or with their telephone. It is possible to look like a child of God living in the light on the outside, even coming to church every Sunday, but then live as a child of the darkness during the week by secret contacts with other people and other web places that come from the land of darkness. It is under the cover of darkness that Satan seems especially good at leading Christians back into the world of darkness.

Stay in the light of God's Son. Stay close to the love that Jesus has for you and this light will expose the darkness for what it is. "But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, or it is light that makes everything visible." This thought of making things visible is also found in 1 Corinthians where it describes Jesus coming in glory and showing evil for what it truly is. "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God." When Jesus returns he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. Even before he returns he allows us to expose the darkness and stay away from it when we walk in the light of his love.

Our words for today end with an interesting quote. "Wake up O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." We don't know whether this was a popular hymn at that time, or a well known saying Christians used to help each other stay out of the darkness. The book of Ephesians has one of the greatest prayers for staying in the light of the Savior's love. Let me read this to you from chapter three: "For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen”

You may be experiencing the darkest and coldest and dreariest time of your life. And yet you live, you always live in the light of the Son, God’s Son. Amen.