

August 15, 2021
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Ephesians 5:6-21

WALKING AS A CHILD OF THE LIGHT.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the St Paul's epistle letter to the Ephesians, the 5th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

St Paul is not writing his letter to unbelievers but to:

“... the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 1:1)

He is also writing to the saints at St Timothy Lutheran in Huber Heights, and all saints of all times who are **in Christ** Jesus. Over the past several weeks we've heard Paul beautifully illustrate the doctrine of the Holy Christian Church, what it means to be **in Christ**: the one who is saved by grace alone through faith **in Christ** alone and an adopted heir and partaker of the promise **in Christ Jesus** through the Gospel. (cf: Ephesians 3:6)

We've heard Paul teach how your life as a Christian is shaped in accordance with the Gospel. He urges you and all believers to walk in a manner appropriate to your calling as a redeemed child of God. When the Bible refers to the **way of walking**, it's not only referring to a person's outward actions and deeds, but it's also referring to the entire life of faith, confession, and obedience to God's Word.

God has done all the work. Jesus has won your salvation. The Holy Spirit has called and enlightened you by the Gospel. (cf: Romans 10:17) You've been called out of darkness into the true light of Jesus who gives light to everyone. (cf: John 1:9; 1 Peter 2:9) And because you have been called, St Paul urges you to walk the Christian walk lest you fall back into your old sinful ways which could lead you away from faith **in Christ**. He reiterates that point in today's text saying:

“8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...” (v. 8)

The contrast between darkness and light is a metaphor used throughout Holy Scripture to illustrate the opposition between the devil's realm of evil and the Kingdom of God. The Christians living in Ephesus were much like you and me and every other Christian community ever known to mankind. They were believers in Christ surrounded by unbelievers living openly depraved lifestyles of sin.

Because of Adam's sin in the garden, we live in a broken world that is mired under and enslaved in sin. You daily struggle with temptations from the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh, and that struggle becomes greater when you see others around you freely participating in those sinful things in which you used to indulge. There is no escape. Ways to feed your addictions are readily available. There is always some new toy to spend your hard-earned dollars on. And when it comes to relationships, the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. We live in a time when every sort of sensual, violent, and vulgar programming is delivered to the privacy of your computer, cell phone, and TV.

Society continually preaches to you that it's your life and you can do what you want. They say your personal pleasure and gratification is what's most important. You only live once, so go for the gusto. And like urban legend of putting a frog in lukewarm water, then slowly raising the temperature until it is boiled to death, you and I become less aware of the difference between the words and deeds that flow from darkness and those that flow from light.

Regardless of what psychologists, doctors, and political pundits suggest, sin is at the root of every broken relationship, heartache, sickness, and death. St Paul warns you in today's text:

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” (v. 6)

Paul doesn't whitewash, turn a blind eye, or excuse the popular cultural sins of the day. No. He warns of the wrath of God against unrepentant sinners. You and I would do well to do the same. While there are many types of deception stemming from empty and false words, the ***“these things”*** that Paul refers to in our text, he lists in the verses immediately prior to our reading, namely, sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking, all of which are still common in our world today. (cf: Ephesians 5:3–4)

So that we might know the truth about sin, God gave his Law, the Ten Commandments. The Second use of the Law, the Mirror of God's Law shows that you and I are idolaters of every false god imaginable. We fear, love, and trust in all things... that is, except for the one true God. In our text Paul is focusing on the Sixth Commandment in particular.

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

Sexual immorality can also be translated as fornication and is a synonym for marital unfaithfulness and adultery. (cf: ANLEX, 323) Fornication covers everything from lust in the eye (cf: Matthew 5:28) to any sexual intimacy outside God's holy estate of marriage between one man and one woman united as one flesh. Each sin within the entire immorality spectrum is just as deserving of eternal damnation as the next.

Impurity can be translated as any behavior and sexual filthiness unacceptable to God. (cf: ANLEX, 39) It includes foul talk, dirty jokes, filthy books and movies, and making light of sexual immorality by condoning and embracing it in word and deed.

Covetousness is greed... a desire to have more than one's share. (cf: ANLEX, 316) It's pursuing pleasure for pleasure's sake. As long as the individual cannot see how his desires directly harm his neighbor, anything goes. It can become one's religion. Among the unbelievers in Ephesus, it was common to go to the temple of the fertility goddesses and engage in the services of sacred prostitutes as part of their worship, pursuing pleasure just because they could. The same religion is practiced today. Doing whatever pleasures the flesh is protected as a person's right. [sarcasm on→] "*Why should anyone else care. I'm not hurting anyone. If it feels good, do it.*" [← sarcasm off]

Paul goes on to say:

"... do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (cf: v. 17)

God's will is that all people be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (cf: 1 Timothy 2:4) Yet, the foolish want nothing to do with Jesus and His work of salvation. They're too busy living in darkness, pursuing the pleasures of the world.

Paul says:

"... do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery..." (v. 18)

Debauchery is giving oneself over to reckless immoral behavior (cf: ANLEX, 80) and was, in Paul's day, a feature of pagan worship, and remains so today. But fellow redeemed, regarding all these sinful vices:

"... that is not the way you learned Christ!" (Ephesians 4:20)

"⁸ ... at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." (v. 8)

Because you were mired under and enslaved in sin, unable to save yourself, God, in His rich love and mercy, chose you **in Christ** from before the foundation of the world. In Baptism you were united to Jesus perfect life, death, and resurrection (cf: Romans 6:3-5) and forgiven you of your immorality, impurity, covetousness, and all your sins. The Holy Spirit has called you by the Gospel. You've been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Jesus. (cf: John 1:9; 1 Peter 2:9)

As a child of light, walk in a manner appropriate to your calling. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (cf: v. 10) Expose the unfruitful works of darkness for what they are. (cf: v. 11) They're sin! Turn off your phone and TVs and avoid taking about what others do in secret. (cf: v. 12) Not because these things earn you God's favor, that you would somehow become what you already are **in Christ**. No. You do it because you are a child of light and it's God's good and Holy will for your life. It's the Third use of the Law. As God's beloved child, the believer seeks to learn and do what pleases our heavenly Father. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, it's something that you are strengthened to do. (cf: v. 18)

The Christian is to be salt to the earth and a light to this darkened and unsavory world. (cf: Matthew 5:13-16) By lighting the way, those who are asleep and trapped in darkness might be called by the Gospel and arise from the sleep of death and into the light of Jesus. (cf: v. 13-14) Some will be transformed. Unfortunately, others will prefer to remain asleep in darkness, worshipping their false gods of excess. And you can't change that. You are merely child of light.

It is Christ who is the light of the world. The Holy Spirit moves when and where He wills. (cf: John 3:8) All you can do is shine the light. Jesus says:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

As a new creation in Christ, you are light in the Lord. (cf: v. 8)

“... you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

You can now see God for who He really is. He’s not an angry God keeping score on how well you keep His Commandments, waiting for you to cross the line so He can squish you like a bug because of your sin. He’s loving God who sent His Son to endure His entire wrath against your sin. Walking in the light of Christ is to walk as children of God, walking in repentance and faith. Repenting for all your deeds done in darkness and clinging to the righteousness of Christ in faith that your sins are forgiven.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

“... you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

By the life-saving work of Christ Jesus, you have been bought and brought from death and darkness to life and light. You are God’s child of light right now. God grant His Holy Spirit that He may teach you His ways and that you may walk in His paths. (cf: Isaiah 2:3)

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.