

SERMON FOR 12th Sunday after Pentecost – August 15, 2021 Our Redeemer  
Ephesians 5:8-14 “Don’t Dim Out! Shine With Christ’s Light!”

Dear fellow Redeemed,

Whatever happened to blushing? You know, when hearing words that are embarrassing or shameful, a person’s cheeks may lighten with color. Blushing is a sign of a lively sensitivity to evil and moral darkness. In our day and age, it seems people blush less and less.

- Is that a sign of a deadening of spiritual life in our society?
- Is our consciousness, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, becoming dimmer?
- Doesn’t it seem to you that we live in a day and age when people no longer see the clear line between right and wrong, between what is moral and what is immoral?

Even Christians – exposed as we are to TV and movies with so much vulgarity, illicit sex, and violence – even Christians seem less aware of the difference between deeds and words that flow from darkness and those that flow from light. Perhaps the question each of us ought to be asking ourselves is this:

- “Is the light which emanates from Christ and His Word ‘dimming out’ in our souls?”
- “Has our sense of right and wrong become so dulled that we too, who claim to be Christians, are often deceived into thinking that we can live in the darkness of sin and still maintain our Christianity?”
- The apostle John in his 1st epistle puts it this way in answer: “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him, yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.”

Paul’s encouragement to us today on the basis of our epistle lesson is this:

“Don’t Dim Out! Shine with Christ’s Light!”

We are to be Light-Persons who live in the light of Christ’s love, in contrast to darkness-persons who turn away from God and follow the ways of the world. If a healthy, growing plant is taken out of the light and placed in a

dark room, it will die. In the same way, if we who believe in Christ begin to walk in the darkness, to live without concern for purity, we remove ourselves from Christ and once more belong to the domain of darkness where death, eternal separation from God, is the final end.

Paul says: vv.7-8) “Therefore do not associate with them; [8] for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”

We are to treasure our transition from dark death to life and light. You see, a remarkable change has occurred in our lives. Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God through His death on the cross. Jesus Christ has, as Paul tells the Colossian Christians, (1:3,14) He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We were once darkness, Paul says. There was no mixture of darkness along with some inner light inside of us. Our whole being was darkness. Earlier in this epistle Paul describes us as being “dead in our trespasses and sins.” By nature, we are dead in sin, enemies of God and blind to his love and mercy.

But we are no longer darkness – we have become “light in the lord!” By the grace of God and work of His Holy Spirit, we now belong to the kingdom of God and have an inheritance in His kingdom. When we are brought to faith by God’s power through His Word, something happens. New life, new power, a new mind, new attitudes, a new will, and new desires are given us. It is a change so radical that St. Paul describes it as a new creation: (2 Corinthians 5:17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come.” What a contrast! From darkness to light; from death to life; from sinful nature to a new creation!

And now that this incredible change has occurred in us, Paul urges us to “Walk (Live) as children of light!” Paul says: (v. 9) The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.” We are no longer creatures of darkness; instead, we have become light in the Lord. Just as a tree that is planted in good soil will bear fruit, so also, we as children of light will try to live a life that is pleasing to God.

- It is the very nature of light to shine and to illuminate.

- It is the very nature of those who have been brought from darkness to light to seek the sort of conduct that is pleasing to God.
- Those who believe in Christ, though still sinners who have the same struggle as Paul that what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do, are new creatures who by the power of the Spirit are able to do what is right and good and true.
- Their renewed will wants to do what pleases God.

Martin Luther once said, “A stone that lies in the sun does not have to be told to be warm. It simply becomes warm.” A person who has become light in the Lord does not have to be compelled to do what pleases God; such a person will by his/her new nature try to learn what sort of conduct will make God happy. The person who has become light in the Lord will shine by the Lord’s power. My friends, You are light. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven.

Paul goes on: Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead, expose them. An old proverb says, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Here we are told the exact opposite. We live in a world where immorality, filthiness, and greed are the accepted way of life for many people.

- We are to be particularly concerned with our fellow Christians who have been deceived into thinking that their own life-style can simply be an imitation of the life-style of the world in which we live, and yet shall maintain our claim on Christ.
- You can’t do it! Paul says, “That’s darkness!”
- Live in such a way that your own life exposes the darkness for what it really is. Let your fellow Christians see in you the contrast between a life that is lived in the light and a life lived in the works of darkness.

We have here the encouragement from Paul to be alert. Don’t dim out! “Wake up, O Sleeper: rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.” As a person of the light, we will want to keep alert and want to find out what is God’s will, and then with his help live according to it.

- Have you ever been caught sleeping in class? You may have been a good student. Still, your teacher shocked you with his/her wake up call.
- Or, have you ever been driving along and suddenly hit the gravel on the side of the road after having fallen asleep? That sudden jolt really wakes you up!

My friends, we all need to be awakened from time to time. In Jesus' parable of the ten virgins, the wise ones (Christians) also fell asleep. God shouts to us today to be alert, to discover what pleases him, so that we may do it. This involves a transformation (change) in your thinking, as Paul explains in Romans 12: 1-2 "I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God which is your spiritual worship...Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...his good, pleasing and perfect will."

So, instead of tuning out God's voice, we are to actively look for opportunities to receive input from him through His Word. God promises: Christ will shine on you! In Christ, God has sent the light that still shines on us: his grace, forgiveness, and life. God will provide all the light we need for any and every situation that arises. Living in God's light, we are enabled by him to bear more and more fruit to his glory.

Anna Mary Robertson Moses, affectionately known as "Grandma Moses", started painting when she was 78 years old. Her work was first discovered when a man named Louis Caldor saw her painting displayed in a drugstore window in Hoosick Falls, New York, in 1939. After that, her paintings were displayed in over 100 exhibitions around the United States and in Europe as well. She lived to be 101 years old. What a tragedy it would have been if she had not taken up painting in those last 23 years of her life. Instead, she painted not only for her own enjoyment; she enhanced others' joy by her work. Light from God did not dim out when she got older; that light beamed brighter than it had before!

- May your and my new life in Christ glow and produce increasingly more fruit – beautiful fruit by the power of the Father of light, His Son, and the Holy Spirit, who enlightens us with his gifts daily.
- May we, with each passing day, let Christ's light shine in us ever more brightly and also shine through us to a world that needs His light!

Amen.