

**Especially at Advent ...**  
**Sermon on Ephesians 5:8-14**  
**Saint Mark's Watertown**  
**Pastor Karl Walther**  
**November 27, 2005**

Scripture says of Jesus: *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* Amen.

God's Word for our special consideration on this first Sunday of Advent is Ephesians chapter five, verses eight through fourteen:

***For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light -- for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth -- and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 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."***

This is God's Spirit-inspired Word of Jesus Christ.

**Part One: We Were Once Darkness**

Dear fellow Christians—anticipating the arrival of Jesus this Advent Season:

Do you suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder?

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder, you say? Yeah, I had to look it up on the 'net, as well! Seasonal Affective Disorder is the ailment in which people are more sad during the winter months than they are during the summer months. In fact, Seasonal Affective Disorder is abbreviated "S.A.D."—sad.

I guess the theory is that our bodies make more of a hormone called melatonin when it is darker out in winter. And that hormone melatonin depresses us. But I don't know if that's the explanation. I'm not sure that God didn't simply make us to enjoy light and to feel a certain level of vague anxiety when it is dark.

So, I suppose most of us suffer from "SAD", Seasonal Affective Disorder—especially during this time of year.

You're probably like me. Even though I think I'm a fairly cheery person, even though I sleep well and have no trouble getting up in the morning: I wake up each morning when it's dark, and I feel kind of vaguely gloomy. I stumble around in the dark without my contacts in, trying to find the lights. I look out the windows, and it's still dark. I exercise; it's still dark. I shower, and it's still dark, and my mind is on all the things I have to get accomplished during the day, and I'm worried they won't get done. And my mood is just quite a little gloomy....

No wonder God's Word to us today begins this way: ***You were once darkness!***

And we were!!! We entered this world in darkness. Who could say whether we'd be normal? Who could say whether we'd ever feel well? Who could say whether we would have a good family as we grew up? No one could say whether we'd find work we'd like. No one could say whether we might marry, or no—and whether that would "work out". No one could say whether we might have children, or not—and whether they'd bring happiness or sadness to us. Our life was once darkness and uncertainty.

And then we grow old maybe, grow sick probably, and die for sure. And it all just brings on us this sense of sadness, this vague gloominess. But the darkest thing is that all along our conscience tells us that this is happening because things are not right. Our conscience tells us there is a God, and he hates sin, and we do sin, and sinfulness is

born and bred into us. And so, when we die, we deserve the sickness, we deserve the pain, we deserve the death, and we deserve the hell that we will receive everlastingly....

## **Part Two: Now We Are Light in the Lord**

...But: *But now you are light in the Lord!*

I mean: doesn't light make all the difference?! Some of the best therapy, they say, for Seasonal Affective Disorder is: an hour's walk outside—even in the winter.

I mean: my little bit of a gloomy mood every day – and I'm guessing: yours, too! – lasts only about as long as it takes me to get outside, especially if the sun is shining that day. And I'm walking Christopher to school, I'm walking over to work, and I'm thinking, "You know, this day won't be so bad after all!" In fact, I get to thinking how many opportunities I might have that day to share with you, or a classroom full of people, or individuals I visit the good news of Jesus—and I get downright cheery. And then, I walk home at noon to my lovely wife, and especially if the sun is shining – even if it is glowing off the snow! – I am positively happy. And I'm pretty confident, with a couple variations, it's exactly the same for you.

In the same way: *Now you are light in the Lord.*

The gloomy sadness of your sins lasted only so long as it took for you to get to know the Light of the World, Jesus Christ. And his bright righteousness chased away the darkness of all of your gloomy sins!

When Jesus Christ shone into your world, either when you got to know him through his Word as an adult, or when his bright light dawned upon you through water and his Word in baptism—when Jesus Christ shone into your world, all the darkness disappeared. Now: normal or abnormal, sick or healthy, good family or bad, worker or non-worker, single or married, parent or non-parent—it doesn't really matter! Your life is enlightened by him who is brightness and light, righteousness and sunshine, now and forever. And you can trust that, whatever your life's condition, he has you right where he wants you in life.

But there's more! You get to the end of your life. And despite the darkness of death brought on by the wickedness of your sins: that bright Light, Jesus Christ, promises to bring you from the light of forgiveness here to the light of his life forever. It's no accident – is it? – that Christ promises us in the last chapter of the Bible: in heaven *there will be no more night. You will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give you light. And you will reign for ever and ever.*

## **Part Three: We Live as Children of Light**

So: *You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.* Praise be to Christ! And how is that going to affect your life? Well, just the way a bright light shining into a dark place no longer leaves it the same, the bright Light of Jesus Christ transforms your dark life, and you are no longer the same. It probably occurs in four different ways, at least as the inspired Apostle Paul lists them here....

First: *Live as children of light -- for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.*

My friend, the Light of the World Jesus Christ has shone into your soul! So, whatever is good, whatever is right, whatever is true—live your life inside that sphere! If you're a student, dedicate yourself to learning what you're supposed to—even if it cuts into your time with video games. If you're a worker, dedicate yourself to doing what you're supposed to do at work—even if it's unpleasant. If you're free from study and work, find yourself something to do that serves your Savior—and dedicate yourself to doing it!

So, how does the bright Light of Jesus Christ chase away the darkness of your sin, day by day? Friend: pursue what is good!

Now, let's take a look at the second of the four directives here: ***Find out what pleases the Lord.***

My brother, my sister: the bright sunshine of Christ's grace has dawned upon you and warmed you from the inside out! So, find out what pleases him—and do it! And how are you going to find out what pleases the Lord? – From his Word to you, of course! So, today the new set of Meditations starts. Pick up a booklet, and never fail to read it! Today a whole new church year starts. So, pick up your Bible, and read a chapter or more daily! Or decide now that in January you are going to get to a Bible Class regularly. And you will find out, more and better, what it is that pleases the Lord.

You are children of the Light. Living like it, second of all, means that you aim to please the Lord!

Now third, God's Holy Word commands: ***Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness.***

My friend: like a thousand watt bulb, Christ Jesus has shone into the cold dark basement of your life. He has chased away all your darkness. So, don't do dark deeds anymore!

If you've been slandering somebody else, quit it! If every dollar you earn, and then some, is a dollar you spend on yourself, stop it! If you've been having sex outside of marriage, or if you've been surfing the net for porn, dedicate yourself to marriage instead. If you've been abusing your body, or that of another, quit it—and we have help for you! If you've been committing crimes, now is the time to stop! And you're probably going to need help with it all, and you'll probably need to make yourself continually accountable to a Christian friend. And probably most importantly, if you've been failing frequently to worship your Savior, now is the time to quit valuing his Word to little!—and we'll see you back right here this coming Wednesday.

That's what it means to live as children of the Light.

And fourth and finally: ***But rather expose the fruitless deeds of darkness. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.***

So, as I said – no, as the Lord says here in his Word! – light drives out darkness. Where any light shines, it's more powerful than darkness, and darkness cannot exist, right?

So, shine your Gospel light into the darkness! When somebody else is defending his slander, when somebody else is defending his greed, when somebody else is defending his lust, his abuse, his rebellion, his – yawn! – take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward God's Word: shine Christ's Gospel light on that darkness. Say: "My friend: lay that sin of yours at the foot of Christ's cross. There you'll find it fully forgiven. And he'll give you power more and more to leave your life of sin—just as he's graciously done for me."

## **Conclusion: Especially at Advent**

You see: Especially at Advent – and all the more especially as the morning's light gets even later and the nighttime comes even earlier – You Were Once Darkness. But especially at Advent – as the lights go up to commemorate Him who is the Light of the World – You Are Now Light in the Lord. And especially at Advent – as we begin a new year at church – Live as Children of Light!

As our text concludes: ***This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!"*** Amen.

Scripture testifies concerning Jesus: *The true light that gives light to every person was coming into the world.* Amen.