

SERMON FOR MARCH 19, 2023

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5: 14

THEME: A WAKE UP CALL

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

In the name of Jesus:

Now that we have the time change to Daylight Saving Time under our belt for a week, how are you feeling? If you are like me, while I am thrilled with the extra daylight hours in the evening, it takes a while for the body to become adjusted to the time change. Scientists say that this is completely normal. They call it a disruption of our circadian rhythm in our body. Our bodies have an intrinsic circadian system that regulates many of the systems in our body. Losing an hour of sleep during daylight saving time can often disrupt this rhythm, which might be the reason why this past week you have noticed that you are more tired than normal, and that you seem to be not as energetic throughout the day. It takes about a week for your body to adjust to the time change. Perhaps that is the reason why you have been hitting the snooze button on the bedside alarm more often this week. Your body is trying to adjust so that you can be more awake.

So too, the call from the Apostle Paul is for Christians to live as disciples and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has already stated that each of us

were born spiritually dead and enemies of God, at one time following the prince of the power of the air, Satan. We were sons of disobedience, living according to the passions of our fleshly desires, just as the world lives according to their own desires today.

But God has saved us, each of us, by grace, through faith in Jesus. Our salvation is God's doing, and God's alone. We don't have any reason to boast. If we are given to boasting, we are to boast of God, of His love for us in Jesus, and for what He has done for us in Jesus, sending His only Son into our world to live, suffer, die, and rise again for our salvation.

So Paul here in our text talks about Christian discipleship, the daily activity of following Jesus in every activity of life. Seeing as each of us have received the free gift of salvation given to us in Jesus, how then are we to live? What is our Christian life to look like?

The temptation for each of us is to just go on living in a way and manner that the rest of the world lives. It is to live in darkness, as enemies of God. Now how does an enemy of God live? Just as Paul describes, to live in the darkness means that you will live according to your sinful desires. God has made you free in Christ, but you use that freedom to serve yourself rather than serving God and others. And so you live first and foremost with your own selfish and self centered interests in mind. We are tempted us to live sexually

immoral lives, to give into jealousy, be driven by fits of anger, to envy and desire what is not ours, to seek revenge and retribution, and to dismiss anyone and everyone who doesn't conform to the standards of the culture. Today you hear a great deal about the cancel culture. This is an effort by people that seeks to reject, boycott, and shun anyone who doesn't say or act according to the norms of the culture and society. Some will even try to intimidate and bully others into conforming to the norms of society. It is a culture and people that is actually walking in darkness and claiming to be the light of the world. It is expected that you will conform to the ways of the world, and if not, then you will be judged as judgmental, you will be marginalized, and hated for your beliefs and way of life.

Paul reminds us in our text for today that this is how sinful nature behaves and acts. It is how the sinner in each of us wants to behave. And as Christians we are tempted to act and live in the very same ways that the world lives. But this is not the way of Christ. Jesus who is the Light of the world, shows us that this is sinful and a way of living that is opposed to God. And so Jesus, the Light of the world, shines His light and shows us the way He calls us to live. And this way of living is rooted in and based in the darkness that He suffered on the cross.

Just listen to how the Bible describes the death of Jesus: “It was now about noon and darkness came upon the whole land until three in the afternoon.” (paraphrase of Luke 23: 44). As Jesus hung on the cross, the darkness of sin and death was placed upon Him by His Heavenly Father. Just as the Bible says, “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” There on the cross Jesus suffered the darkness of sin, death, and Hell, and He did it all for you. His cry from the cross reveals this stark truth, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” Jesus was damned on the cross to defeat the darkness, so that by His victorious resurrection on Easter He gives victory over the darkness to all who believe. You could say that God the Father canceled His Son Jesus on the cross, so that He would not ever cancel you! While the world lives and loves the darkness, God calls us to turn from the darkness of the world to the darkness of the cross, for in the cross of Christ we see the Light and the love that God has for you.

You have received the Light and love of God in the waters of your Baptism. Like the blind man in the Gospel lesson today you, in faith, can see how much God really and truly loves you. And like the blind man, God calls you to live a new life giving glory to Him. When Jesus gave the blind man the gift of sight, the man didn't return to his former ways of living. He was a new man, and sought to use his gift of eyesight to see and experience the gifts and

the new life Jesus had given to him. So too, Jesus has given you a new life. And in this season of Lent, He calls you to a life of ongoing and continual repentance. To daily examine yourself in the light of God's Law, to see your sin, to confess it, and then look to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away your sin and the sin of the world. Then, being cleansed from sin, you are now encouraged to walk in the light of Christ.

John puts it this way in his First Epistle: "If we walk in the Light as he is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin." This, dear brother and sister in Christ, is how we walk in the Light, for in Baptism we are forgiven of our sin and empowered by the Spirit to live our lives for Jesus. Dying to sin, we awaken each and everyday as God's forgiven children, so that our lives are now filled with the fruits of the Spirit, abounding in love, peace, joy, goodness, and truth, giving glory to the Lord who has called us out of darkness to live in His marvelous Light. For Jesus says, "You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14). By our Baptism into Christ, he lives in us, enlightening the eyes of our hearts, awakening us to be able to walk in the newness of life. So that Paul is able to say in our text, "Now you are light in the Lord . . . as children of light" (v 8).

And so now, we see things in a whole new way. We see God not as some distant being far removed from the reality of our lives, but He is really here,

present, in His Word, in our worship, in the Supper, enlightened us and empowering us with the love of Jesus, so that we can share that Light and love with everyone we meet.

This means that we also see our world differently in this new light. We are to “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (v 10). We do that by not believing everything or by giving into the norms of society and our culture, but by testing the spirits to see whether they are from God. We do that by keeping our eyes and lives focused on what God says in His Word, so that we can then identify those things which are not pleasing to the Lord, reject those things that are not pleasing to the Lord and walk away from them.

That is in keeping in how God in His Word tells us to live. ““Awake, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” You have been purchased with the blood of Jesus, so that you won’t sleepwalk throughout your life and give into the influences of the world around us. Instead, you are to live a life of ongoing repentance, daily confessing your sins, for He is faithful and just and will forgive you all your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. For when you live in the light of God’s love and forgiveness, you show others the love of Christ so that they might join us to walk in the glorious light of Christ. To the glory of God and in Jesus’ name. Amen