

“Living with the Light On”
Ephesians 5:8-14 Lent4A 3-26-17

About 200 to 300 years ago, Western Civilization began to experience the Age of Enlightenment. It witnessed the rise of scientific discovery, democracies, and greater confidence in man’s ability to form an ideal social order. In some ways, this resulted in a better life for us today.

However, it also brought about an age of spiritual endarkenment. For while great strides were made in science and philosophy, the Light of God’s Word was being snuffed out. Faith became the servant of reason, even within the Church. In Biblical interpretation, human wisdom trumped the text. Theologians explained miracles as natural occurrences or denied they ever happened. Christ’s virgin birth and resurrection became symbolic myths, not literal events. By ignoring the unchangeable truths of original sin and the inability to perfect ourselves, societies tried to create heaven on earth without the wisdom of the Creator of heaven and earth.

We heard in today’s readings examples of how endarkenment is a false enlightenment. Because the Pharisees claimed to see, they were blind. Isaiah refers to Israel as one who “sees many things, but does not observe them”. They had religion without understanding or submission to God.

Paul wrote in Ephesians that as children of light we are not to live as if we did not see. It’s easy to think we see something when we are actually blind to it. The handout given last week contained this quote from a Stephen Minister: *“My wife no longer tells me I don’t listen. So she appreciates my Stephen Minister training too.* This man had thought he was a good listener, but his wife and his training showed him he had a blind spot, or deaf spot.

In Wednesday Lenten services, we explore the meaning of each of the Ten Commandments. This exposes our deliberate blindness to what God wants of us. It reminds us that we really do need God to save us and to help us love better. In Paul’s Words, the Bible helps us to “discern what is pleasing to the Lord” so that we can tell what is “good, and right, and true.”

That makes God’s Word a light of protection for us. David wrote in Psalm 119, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* By the Word, we can know how to live with the light on.

When I spend the night away from home, I appreciate that someone has left on a nightlight. Without one, I might stub my toe on an unfamiliar object if I needed to get up during the night. The Word of God sheds light on the dangerous places where walking could cause us harm. It’s best to walk with the light of God’s Word always on so that we might see.

The most dangerous darkness is the denial of our sinfulness. If we try to conceal our sin from God, we deny ourselves his love and forgiveness. Jesus said that in the end those who preferred the darkness in this life will be cast into utter darkness forever. The light shows us our sin so that it can show us our Savior. We have to be in the light to see both.

Living in the Light not only protects us from earthly and eternal danger, but it is also a testimony to others of what God can do for us and through us. Jesus says in Matthew, *“You are the light of the world. ... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

We are in a time of social upheaval. Moral blindness is viewed as enlightenment. Yet, the world thinks that those who truly see God and themselves in the Light of His Word are living in darkness and superstition. Unlike the idea of progressive utopianism of the Enlightenment era, the direction of the world is not on a steady road to progress. As long as many reject the true light in favor of their own light, the world will remain in darkness.

So, let us take Paul’s words to heart. Walk as children of the light. Arise daily in repentance from the sleep of denying sin and know that in His forgiving grace, Christ is shining his light on us.

The words of our text lead into a fitting way to conclude today’s thoughts, with sound instructions on how to stay in the light, so that we may walk as children of the Light. Beginning in verse 15, Paul continues.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

We can live with the Lights on, even in a dark world, by staying connected to God’s words, worshiping him for his gracious love, and uniting in fellowship with his people. By these means, God heals our blindness, that we may walk together as children of light. Amen.