

Stewardship Sunday – Christ’s Love is Our Calling - Using my Time to Steward my Calling
September 19, 2010 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
Based on Ephesians 5:8-20 written by Pastor Paul Horn

Children of Light, Make the Most of Every Opportunity

1. Expose the fruitlessness of the world
2. Reflect the light of the Gospel

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for 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."***

¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's been a month since 33 miners have been trapped in a mine in Chile. The latest update said that the miners are experiencing stress and anxiety. It makes sense when you only have 600 square feet of living space, are secluded ½ mile underground, limited in your daily actions, and it's hot and humid. The rescue workers reported that the miners have resorted to recklessly driving machinery through tunnels and are fighting with the people who are trying to help them. They are no longer rejoicing over their survival, but have grown irritable and angry. They haven't received letters from loved ones yet. One miner stated that he felt abandoned by his wife. And it will be months before the rescue tunnel is drilled. And now, the drill bit is stuck, leaving rescue workers wondering... has all of our work been fruitless? Will they die or will they live to see the light of day?

People of this world live in darkness, Christians live as light

Many people live in a hopeless world. It's easy to understand with so much uncertainty; the economy, lack of job security, deployment, illness or disease. Although they live above ground, at times they feel like they're underground, trapped in a mine.

At times, we as Christians may personally feel like we're trapped in our own little mine of hopelessness and despair. For us, as Christians, life is different. Although we live in the same world, Paul calls us children of light. The gospel, the good news of Jesus, enlightens our hearts, so that we can clearly see the hope we have in Christ through the darkness of this evil world. We live as children of light.

Paul describes that life. Vs9,10 **The fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth and find out what pleases the Lord.** Typically trees produce fruit, but here Paul says

that light produces fruit. We measure our fruit, that is, everything we do in thought, word and deed, by holding it up to the light of Christ. Do my thoughts, words and deeds reflect the light of Christ? Are they done in goodness, righteousness and truth? Is what I do pleasing to the Lord? And Paul says, "As you live as a child of the light, you will want to **make the most of every opportunity.**" Paul says to make the most of the time you have in this evil world to produce the fruit of light. What we do in the light is fruitful; it is beneficial for our souls and pleasing to God. Making the most of every opportunity to produce fruit also keeps us away from **the fruitless deeds of darkness** (vs11). Paul says to us to have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. In other words, "Stay away! If you make it your habit to practice the fruitless works of this wicked world you will plunge yourself into darkness."

These deeds of darkness Paul describes are things which are shameful even to mention. It's somewhat embarrassing to even say it. But he's going to talk about it, and we will too, because it is necessary to allow the light of God's Word to expose those sins. He lists one of those deeds of darkness in vs18, "**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.**" Paul isn't saying here that drinking alcohol is a sin, but that drinking to the point of drunkenness is a sin, and bad things, (debauchery), oftentimes shameful and embarrassing things, accompany drunkenness. Paul says, "Don't waste your time on these fruitless deeds of darkness."

Not everyone struggles with the overindulgence of alcohol. There are other shameful deeds of darkness. Paul employs some logic in regards to the deeds, noting that if they are done in secret it supports the thought that they must be shameful. The obvious sins committed in secret are adult chat rooms and sexually explicit photographs viewed in the privacy of one's own home. Sex outside of the marriage or before marriage are often committed under the cover of darkness. But are not the quiet whispers of gossip and slander or judgmental thoughts committed in secret? Are not the sins of fear and worry, sins that we hide in the dark corners of our hearts? Are not the lies that we bury deep in the basement of our souls also sins?

You don't have to be a miner to know that walking around in darkness is downright dangerous. The light of God's Word exposes sins as harmful to the body and mind; these sins mentioned before ruin relationships and marriages, destroy bodies, reputations and jobs. But the greatest danger for those who continue to walk around in darkness is the death of their soul and the loss of the light of eternal life, plunging them into the darkness of despair in this life and the darkness of eternal suffering in the one to come.

How foolish to know the light of Christ, the hope of heaven, and continue to spend our time wandering around in darkness and fall forever into hell, to lose the eternal light of Christ! How foolish it would be for those 33 miners to know that there's hope of rescue, only to throw it away by choosing to wander around the mine without light! This is why Paul says, "**Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!**" Wake up from the slumber of your dead deeds of darkness, repent, and turn to Christ! Allow him to let his light shine on you, to expose your deeds, and scatter the darkness of sins and bring the light of forgiveness to your troubled soul. That's what the light of Christ does. He changes you.

When the rescue workers were able to make contact with the trapped miners, a camera showed the men dancing and singing. They couldn't help but rejoice and change their attitude when they heard the good news, "We're coming to get you!" Christ Jesus brought about a change in you and me. As Paul said in our lesson, "**You were once darkness.**" At one time, all we knew were the deeds of darkness and unbelief. And God does not allow darkness to enter his presence. But God changed you. The apostle Paul in Galatians 3:27 said, "**All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**" Through baptism you have been adorned with the robe of Jesus' life. Christ's life is the light that shines in this dark world of sin. The great and shameful deeds of darkness, the fruitless deeds, were not committed by him, not even once; no gossip, no sexual impurity, no lies, no drunkenness. Instead, the fruit of light, righteousness, goodness and truth were the garments that Jesus wore throughout his entire life. Jesus made the most of his time on earth, earning the forgiveness of your sins by his perfect life. Through holy baptism, Christ's life of light has covered over the darkness of your sins. Through baptism, Christ has brought the light of forgiveness to you, even for your shameful and secret sins. Through baptism, Jesus has lifted you out of the darkness of hell and into the light of heaven. For God who says that he hates the darkness of sin, he sees your sin no more. Jesus has made you his children of light.

Although we are God's children, although we have the light of Jesus shining in our hearts, although we know we've been rescued from the darkness of our sins, we still so often find our sins being exposed by God's Word, just like today through this sermon. Because of the weakness of our sinful nature, because of temptations that we fall to, at times we feel trapped, like miners, in the darkness of our disobedience. That's when God's Word shines the light of Christ into your hearts and lifts you up out of darkness again and again. When we are saddened by our shameful deeds, Christ reminds us through the Lord's Supper that his body and blood have washed over our sins to make us light. When we hear the good news of Christ's death on the cross, we are reminded that there, Christ allowed himself to be exposed as the sin of the world in place of us. Through his Word and sacrament the light of Christ continues to shine in us every day.

I read a news article this week that encourages those who work in an office with no windows to get up every now and then and sit in the sun for a few minutes. The sun inhibits the production of melatonin in the brain which causes sleepiness, and produces vitamin D which fights off sleepiness and boosts energy levels. The good news of Christ Jesus is the Son-light that shoos away the grogginess of a lazy sinful nature, and energizes us to live as children of light; to reflect the light of his forgiveness by the way we live.

We will make the most of every opportunity to live as children of light. We will want to shine the light of the gospel wherever and whenever we can. When we see others in despair, we will emanate hope in Christ. In a world scared of death, we will shine with the confidence of the resurrection of the dead. When we see others petrified of seemingly thousands of things, we will walk as children of light in the confidence that is born of faith in a God who never leaves us nor forsakes us. In a world of lies and deception we will bear the light of the truth of God's Word which will never go out. To those who are brokenhearted about their sins, who feel like miners stuck below the earth, we will bring the light of love that comes from knowing the God who has never spared an expense in proving his love and commitment to us.

All of these things become floodlights to the rest of the world and begin to expose the fruitlessness of the things of this world, and shine the fruitful light of Christ. May God give each of us understanding of the days in which we live and a Spirit-born desire to make the most of every opportunity to spend spiritual time with him, so that his light might shine in our hearts, so that we may reflect his light to the world. May God grant it to us for Jesus' sake. Amen.