

Summer sermon series on the 3rd Article of the Creed – June 27, 2010 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

Sermon based on Romans 5:1-5, Acts 26, John 8:12
Horn

Pastor Paul

The Blind Will See!
And have peace, hope, joy and comfort...

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law... (Psalm 119.18)

In the apostle John's account of the life of Jesus, chapter 9, John records a story, when Jesus and his entourage were traveling down a dusty road in Palestine and they see a man sitting there at the side of the road. He had been blind from birth. For all the stories of their lack of faith, the disciples ask their Teacher a deep, theological question, "**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**" The disciples understood the serious condition of the sinful human nature from the Old Testament Scriptures, but this was a different situation. Was there a specific sin committed by the parents and this punishment was inflicted on the child? Had the child committed a sin inside his mother's womb and now he was being punished for it? They weren't sure. As always, Jesus used this as a teaching moment. He replied, "**Neither this man nor his parents sinned** (that is, a specific sin did not cause this blindness), **but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.**" At this exact moment, this man knew his purpose in life: that Jesus would demonstrate his power, that glory would be given to God, that someone might see and hear and believe and be saved.

This man's life is a picture of our spiritual life. From birth, there was no light of Christ in us, not even a spark of faith. From the womb, we did not understand God, we were not able to see what he had done for us through Jesus, we didn't even want to know. Jesus said of the blind man that it was not his fault nor that of his parents. In our case, it is our fault, it is the fault of our parents, it's the fault of the whole human race that each and every child ever born into this world and whoever will be born is born blind to Jesus, blind in unbelief. Back in the Garden of Eden, God told our first parents, "Do not disobey my commands or you will die." They chose to disobey, and the darkness of death and unbelief has been passed down from generation to generation. All are born blind to God.

That's a dangerous place to be... the spiritual darkness of unbelief. It's much like sitting in your home on a hot summer evening and a fierce summer storm blows through and the power goes out. If you don't have a flashlight within reach, it can be a dangerous place to be. Even though you know the layout of your home, it's dark, and you could easily fall down the stairs, trip over the kid's toys or a power cord or run into a wall. How much more dangerous is it not to know where we are going in life, or for eternity. No direction. No hope.

The Apostle Paul from our lesson in Acts 26 this morning is a great example. In the delusion of his spiritual blindness he was convinced that the right thing to do was to oppose Jesus of Nazareth and everything he stood for. So he put Christians into prison. He voted for putting Stephen to death by stoning. He even traveled to other cities to eradicate Christians.

Don't we see these same attitudes and actions from the unbelievers of this world? Jesus said that toward the end of time the love of most will grow cold. Don't we hear more and more about abuse cases? Parents abusing children, spouses abusing each other, children abusing parents, people abusing their own bodies with excessive drug or alcohol use, and even starving their bodies their death. Love grows cold against Christians. There are plenty of movies and TV shows that mock Christian beliefs. Even in us, when we examine our lives, we witness the same deeds of darkness. We would never think about abusing our family or neighbors physically, but don't we do the same things to those we love with verbal and emotional abuse? We abuse people we don't even know, the way we give attitude to a cashier or salesperson or the people with whom we share the roads. We may not abuse bodies with substances, but we neglect our bodies with unhealthy diets and no exercise. The deeds of darkness are even seen in us. God needs to shine his light in our lives. As with all people living in darkness, God had to turn the light on, so we could see.

Have you ever been part of a surprise birthday party? It's great fun. Someone takes the birthday boy or girl on a bogus errand around town. The guests have been instructed to sneak into the home and gather in the room ahead of time. They put out the presents they brought. They turn off the lights. Someone brings the birthday guest into the house, they walk into the room, the lights turn on and everyone yells, "Surprise!" That individual sees the people and the gifts they brought. They had no prior knowledge, they couldn't see.

That's exactly how the Bible describes the work of the Holy Spirit when he brought you to faith. The Holy Spirit enlightened you. You can now see all the treasures of Light that God has given to you.

That's what he did for the Apostle Paul. Paul didn't do some deep soul-searching and discover that what he was doing was unholy. Christ Jesus had to appear to him personally with all the brightness and glory of heaven to change his darkened sinful heart. In the darkness of his unbelief he used to think that Christ Jesus was the enemy. Now, having had Christ's light shine in him, the eyes of his heart clearly saw that Christ Jesus was his Friend and more importantly, his Savior, who had come to rescue him from the darkness of his sins and death. Jesus threw a personalized surprise birthday party just for Paul.

We make a big deal out of birthdays. Why not for our spiritual birthday, the day the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of our hearts to see the gifts God had laid out for us? We know that exact day because the Holy Spirit tells us in his Word that when we were sprinkled with water and the command of Christ the light of Christ Jesus scattered the darkness of our unbelief. The Apostle Paul in Romans 6 tells us that when we were baptized into Christ, we were baptized into his death. Yes, the Light of the world, allowed the darkness of Satan and death and our sins to overcome him, and snuff out the Light of Life, so that he could win.

I don't know if you've heard, but there's a new general in charge of the war in Afghanistan. He would not purposefully allow the Taliban to overcome American forces so that he could win. On that battlefield, that kind of operation doesn't win wars. When Light of the world allowed the sufferings of hell, the darkness of our sinfulness, our sinful unbelief, and Satan's power to come over him and cause him to close his eyes in death, he won. He allowed his light to go out, so that

those forces of darkness would never put our light out forever. For our sins of abuse of family, of our bodies, of others, for our unbelief, we deserved to have our light put out forever. But he died in your place, so that you might live forever.

But Christ did not allow our enemies to keep him locked up in the darkness of death for very long. He rose the victorious general over the adversary; death. Paul tells us again in Romans 6 that just as we were baptized into his death, we were also baptized into his resurrection. Through baptism you receive the victory Jesus won by his death. Through baptism you receive the victory Jesus won by his resurrection. Through baptism you have received the Light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. Through baptism, the Light, Christ Jesus, now shines in your heart, so that the eyes of your heart now see Jesus and all that he has done for you.

You know, we talked about a new general who will be leading our troops in Afghanistan. Some people have great confidence in General Petraeus. He did a lot of good in Iraq. Many feel that he will do well in Afghanistan. As good as a commander that he might be, he will never be able to bring complete peace in any theater, for Christ has told us that there will be war as long as this world exists.

Because Christ's victory over the forces of darkness is so complete, he alone brings everlasting peace to you and me.

In our second lesson from Romans 5, the Apostle Paul says, "**Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" This is not the feeling you have when you go out with your spouse or friends with no kids or grandkids and you say, "Ah, peace and quiet!" This peace is the harmony in the relationship with your God. Stumbling around in the darkness of unbelief, our status with God was: enemy. God destroys his enemies. But now that we've been baptized into Christ, and have been given His death and resurrection, our status has changed. We are now his friends, more than that, his children, his sons and daughters. We have peace with God. That is a gift the Holy Spirit has enlightened you with.

Through his work the Holy Spirit also gives you hope. In Romans 5 Paul writes, "**We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.**" This hope is not a, "I hope I get a Wii for my birthday." This hope is more than wishful thinking. Since the Holy Spirit has opened the eyes of your heart to see Christ, you have the sure hope of heaven. Eternal life is a reality you fully expect to happen. With confidence you will say, "Heaven is my home. Christ will come again and bring me there."

Enlightened with this gift of hope we have joy! "We rejoice!" Paul exclaims it twice in these 5 verses. And why not? When friends come to celebrate a baptism, they bring gifts. It's a happy time. A baby has been brought from death to life, a child of the devil is now made a child of God! That's why every time we are privileged to witness a baptism here at this font, we rejoice in Word and song. For we also remember our baptism.

Enlightened with the gifts of peace, hope and joy, the Holy Spirit also gives us the gift of

comfort. Finally, in Romans 5 Paul says, **“We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance [produces] character; and character [produces] hope.”** Maybe you still struggle with past or present sins of abuse you have doled out. Dear friends, the Holy Spirit enlightens your heart with the gift of comfort. Through his Word of promise in the Gospel and the Sacraments, he reminds you that Christ has forgiven you. The cross is the proof. He gave forgiveness to you personally. Your baptism is the proof. Perhaps you were the victim of abuse. The Holy Spirit reminds you that you have everlasting comfort. One day, it will all be done. No more suffering, no more pain, but eternal joys with your Savior Jesus. While wait, the Holy Spirit, who brought you from death to life, from darkness to light, continues to give you peace, joy and hope and comfort. Rejoice in these gifts from the Holy Spirit! Thank the Holy Spirit for his gifts! Amen!