

Children of Light

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Light; Darkness / Ephesians 5:8–14

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Lenten King. Amen.

The world has changed so drastically in the last two months. Our country in just the last number of days. There is no doubt about it that we are living in a dark time. The words of the last week and a half have been social distancing, bans, mandates, and CoronaVirus. I hate all of them. They all bring darkness, even as the days get longer and the weather gets nicer. This situation is hard on all of us.

Pastorally speaking the last week and a half has been one of the hardest in my almost 10 years of ministry. I have shed more tears over the last number of days than I have in a long time. I've been diving into scripture to receive peace from God and I am. During this time of darkness, I pray that you still in the light. During this time of darkness I pray that you can see the light and share the light with those around you.

Each of our readings for today are very appropriate for the season of Lent and especially where we find ourselves today, worshipping at home with those closest to us. There is general motif in all of our readings, light and darkness, blindness and sight.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ my plea to you during this uncertain time, this time of anxiety is what St. Paul tells us in our text: "Walk as children of the light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."

Expose the works of darkness. Walk as Children of Light. I'm going to be honest, it's going to be very hard over the next days, weeks, and who knows maybe

months to come to not fall into temptation. You are separated from your brothers and sisters in Christ, but I plead with you, Walk as children of light.

Now is the time where you can let your light shine. Now is the time that the world can see you shine. The you here is yes the individual Christian, but also the entire Christian Church. The World needs hope; you and I are the ones that give it to them.

How can you Walk as children of light in this very fearful time, this time of darkness in our world. By number one: Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. What do these look like today:

1. Not respecting those in authority over you. I have heard many speak unkindly about our government. There are many that may think preventing gathering is political overreach. I for one do not. They are doing this for the health of all as we look out for our neighbor. This virus has lots of unknown and can be very deadly. Yes, in this instance, obey your leaders, they are placed there by God for you.
2. You are going to be tempted to hoard, to over-shop, even when there isn't much left in the stores. Again think of your neighbor, get what you need, but nothing more. And if by chance you have more than you need, share it with those that don't.
3. Many of us are going to fight the temptation of fear, anxiety and despair. This is normal especially during times like this. Our Psalm that we read together David was in despair. He was in hiding in cave when King Saul was searching for him to kill him. Yet, when it seemed as if despair was going to overtake the future King, where does he go to? He cries out to the Lord in help. He cries out to the Lord to bring him out of his prison. You might like that today as well. Do not fall into despair or fear. It's easier said than done, because you can't do it on your own.
4. You are also going to be spending much more time with your families at home. You will be spending time with those nearest and dearest to you. Probably more time than you have in a long, long time. You may grow grumpy with each other. I get it, it's hard, our lives are turned upside down. Each day it

seems like things change...which none of us like, especially when it's out of our control.

There's so much more that Satan can use during this time of darkness and uncertain, this time of anxiety and fear. He tempts you with idols of self, your very own selfishness. That's the greatest idol that I see right now. Now it's not money or sports or even academics and jobs, it's the self. The devil will continue to tempt you with this clever idol during this time. Dear Christian, dear Brother in Christ, dear Sister in Christ, I want to all know that even amidst the darkness, the light is there for you, even as you fight against the sinful self with the help of the Holy Spirit. The light is Jesus Christ, the one that is crucified and risen for you.

You have been awoken from the dead by your baptism, by your faith in Christ. Christ is shining on you even now, even in your living rooms, at your dining room table, and if you so choose to worship with us while you are still laying in bed. NO matter where you are, Christ is shining on you.

No matter where you are, no matter what work of darkness you have participated in, whether the ones listed above or your own personal works of darkness, know this Christ Jesus forgives your sins. When Christ opens your eyes to your sins, you repent and Christ forgives. This is the process of restoration of your soul. Yes, Christ Jesus died for you. He died to forgive all of your sins.

His light is there for you. At some point, Christ will indeed bring us out of this so called prison we are in, whether it's in this life or in the life to come. Christ is also your refuge, your portion in the land of the living.

We even hear from the prophet Isaiah recording the words of our Lord, "I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground." Do I know how this is going to happen for you? I don't at least in this physical life. I don't have the answers but God does. God will answer our prayers in his own time and in his own way. How does God turn your darkness into light, your rough places into level ground? He does this by the work of the Cross, that's what gives you comfort during this time. Christ Jesus went through more than you are right now.

When one speaks of Social Distancing, of Self-isolating. Jesus Christ experienced this in the grandest of way when he died for you. As he was dying for you, his

Father even left him to cause him to cry out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Even as he experienced that social distancing to the extreme he spoke words to you, “Father, forgive them.” That forgiveness that comes from the cross and the life and light that comes from the empty tomb is yours.

The light of the world changes how you look at things. Yes, when Christ Jesus shines on you and he is now, he is changing how you look at things. Just think about this the man that was born blind in our Gospel reading, the disciples asked about him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” Sometimes the suffering that we go through is so that we can see God display his power in us.

Dear Children of God, as Christ Jesus Shines on you, Walk as Children of Light, for that is what you are. Let your light shine in your own unique ways. Send a card. Make a phone call, draw a picture. Have devotions with your family. Read God’s Word together as a family or via the phone or social networking. You are Children of Light. I have confidence in you!

Now as you walk through this time with your brothers and sisters in Christ at a distance, you will have things that way you down right now. You are missing your extended family. You are missing your church family. You are fearful and anxious. Rest assured you are not alone. There is light that shines through all of this. There is light that even Covid-19 can’t tough. There is light that shines through your depression and anxiety. You have a light that nothing whatsoever can overcome---not even your own death—when that day comes, can overcome. The devil wants to snuff out your light, he wants to snuff out the light. He is working his hardest at this time, but know that Christ’s light overpowers Satan’s darkness. So as the Scripture says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Christ’s light shines on you, the Children of Light, even amidst uncertain times.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.