

SERMON - "Live As Children of Light" - March 2, 2008  
Text: Ephesians 5:8-14

Recently watching the Oprah show, taking an afternoon moment before preparing dinner and coming to a church meeting, she was talking about a huge internet class with participants from around the world, that would study together a book, "A New Earth", that would help people discover their purpose on this earth.

Now, I commend Oprah for helping millions of people, but it seems to me the source to go to discover one's purpose is God. If we want to know God we, as Christians, go to Jesus Christ. In our Holy Scriptures the writer of Ephesians makes an important observation. If you want to know your purpose in life, then know Christ and "live as Children of Light". But I still ask two questions: How do we become light? What does living as light look like?

Well first knowing Christ is not a heady experience. It involves your whole self, you mind, heart, and soul. It involves God holding you in all your experiences. In allowing God through Christ to hold you, you then become light. As the writer of Ephesians declares: You ARE light! Knowing Christ is letting him in the depths of your live, the good times, the struggles, and the painful times, the celebrative times, and the confusing times. In his embrace you are filled with light of God and life is different and expressed differently.

The first contrast to a life of light compared to one of darkness is found in verse one of Chapter five to live in Christ's love and imitate Christ/God's love and forgiveness. God's love and forgiveness is extended to us through the fragrant

sacrificial offering of Christ on the cross. When we know and experience God's love and forgiveness we are to extend these gifts to others.

Knowing Christ does not prevent us from being hurt. But knowing Christ aids us in dealing with the hurt that makes all the difference in the world. Do we harbor it and let it fester to infect ours and other's lives? Or do we let Christ embrace our hurt and let that hurt be transformed to love and forgiveness?

The best way that I know to deal with hurt whether it be the guilt of the hurt we have caused, the hurt that others caused in our lives, or just the hurt that comes in being human like grief is to hold it before our God. Don't sit on those feelings. Don't dismiss them. Just feel them and hold them out for our God through Jesus Christ to embrace them. What happens is that God's love and forgiveness, the light, permeates the hurt diminishing it in intensity and in frequency.

If we live in Christ's light that changes the darkness of our souls into light we have light to reflect then embraces others souls that we meet on the road of life and then they have the opportunity to be changed. If we do this then rumors of gossip is exposed and diminishes reducing the risk of hurting someone else. We don't use silly or vulgar words that tend to not be truth and can harm. We practice healthy lifestyles for the goodness of our lives. Damaging our lives with alcohol and drugs does not lead to a pathway of light. It leads to destruction and deeper and deeper darkness. The way out is first and foremost going to God and facing one's habits that destroy then giving up your lives power to God and let the healing be shared.

Another characteristic of living as children of light is being thankful. I see the center of many lives as fear, resentfulness, revenge, grumbling, defensiveness, attacking, and anger. As our souls are embraced in Christ's loving arms our soul's light becomes thanksgiving. Thanksgiving! Even in our prayers, think of the time we spend in giving thanks compared to petition for intercession.

We are going to practice thanksgiving. After I say something to give thanks about, you say loudly, "Thanks be to God."

All of our livelihood is from God. Thanks be to God!

All that we have comes from God. Thanks be to God.

Our family and friends are from God. Thanks be to God.

The beauty of the mountains, the rich green of the Northwest, the blue skies, the cloudy skies, the rich fields of crops, the dark rich soil, the blue of lake and ocean waters all comes from our creator God. Thanks be to God!

The gifts and talents of your creation. Thanks be to God!

This church and the faith community that carries out Christ's ministry.

Thanks be to God!

Jesus Christ who lived, died on the cross, and was raised from the grave so that we can have life and have it abundantly. Thanks be to God!

To see the world as a gift from God we see it differently, our attitude of ourselves and those who live with us, is different, and we bring joy to life!!! This light of thanksgiving indeed diminishes darkness.

This spirit of thanksgiving is slowly disappearing in our culture. It is amazing to me that our abundance in our society has left us as a people grumbling and wishing for more and more. We are a rather thankless culture. In Ethiopia, I was amazed in worship that the people who had very little, came to worship in great joy and thanksgiving. They were a light to me and my fatigue and my lifelessness diminished and I was filled more with Christ's light and energy.

The third way of living as Children of Light is to seek out what is pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout the gospels there is one value that comes through in story after story about Jesus interaction with others. That value is treating every human being with dignity. Children, who were seen as worthless in society, Jesus invited to sit on his lap and be blessed them. In last week's gospel lesson of the Samaritan woman he sat with her, shared space with her, drank from her cup, and had conversation with her all cultural taboos, but actions that gave dignity to the woman and transformed her life. A when Jesus met the demonic man who was naked, with broken chains around wrists and ankles, he give the man dignity by asking his name. Jesus does heal him from being "out of his mind" but the beginning of that healing was dignity, asking for his name.

If we are Children of Light then we are called to treat all humanity with dignity no matter what they look like, where they live, what language they speak, what religion they practice, or what they may have done in their lives. We are to bring light into the world by doing what Jesus would have done; treated all humans with dignity.

So if you are wondering what the purpose of your life is? Know that it is living as Children of Light. If you want to know more, awake o sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. In his light you are light and you have light to shine in the world.