

# OUR PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH: **LIVING AS LIGHT**

**Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41**

*Preached by Carolyn Grohman at North Presbyterian Church, Williamsville  
March 2, 2008*

This passage from Ephesians contrasts light and darkness. Light is seen as good and right and true, and darkness is perceived as evil, shameful, and false. Living as children of light is doing what is pleasing to God, and living as children of darkness is doing what is displeasing to God.

We have seen in our country recently many instances of children of darkness. For example, the torture of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, including the use of waterboarding, and the secret rendition of detainees to prisons in other countries where they can be legally tortured. Other examples closer to home include the Bike Path Rapist, and those on the streets of Buffalo who rob or kill for drug money, and those who have pornographic web pages on the Internet and provide easy access to those web sites to children, and those who produce much of what is shown on prime-time television.

In contrast to this way of darkness, the author of Ephesians says that baptized Christians are light and are supposed to live as children of light. Now what specifically does he mean by that? Well, he mentions four things that indicate what it means to live as children of light.

First, he says that as children of light we will try to find out what is pleasing to God. We will intentionally seek to determine what God wants us to do and avail ourselves of the opportunities to learn about God's will and God's way---opportunities such as coming to worship and listening to the scripture readings and the sermons, participating in Sunday School and adult classes, studying the Bible, and asking God to show us what is right.

The second thing that it means to live as children of light is to associate ourselves with the light and avoid the darkness. One way to do that is to join with other children of light as a part of the community of believers, the church. In this family of faith, we are nurtured and supported by those who are also children of light, and we are strengthened and empowered for our life in the world, where we encounter the darkness.

Encountering the darkness is inevitable, because the darkness is so pervasive in our society. But we must be careful, as the author of Ephesians says, to take no part in the works of darkness. This message is particularly important for children and youth to hear. It is very important to choose your friends carefully and not to hang out with the wrong crowd. You know who the wrong crowd is: those who smoke, drink, do drugs, have sex, cheat, steal, and skip classes. If you want to do what is right, what is pleasing to God, avoid those who are doing what is wrong. Stay away from them. Choose your friends from among those who are trying to do what is right.

One of the most serious problems in our society is underage drinking and especially binge drinking among high school and college students. One study I read said that 30% of high school students binge drink (2003 Centers for Disease Control study published in *Pediatrics*, on the WebMD site); and among college students, that number rises to 44%---almost half (2001 Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study). One of my parishioners in a church that I served some years ago almost died from binge drinking in his freshman year in college. He had been the valedictorian of his high school class, was a National Merit Scholar, and was on full scholarship to an Ivy League college; but he got in with the wrong crowd, and it nearly cost him his life. We must be careful to avoid the darkness and to take no part in the works of darkness.

The third thing that it means to live as children of light is not just to avoid the darkness but also to expose it for what it is: evil, sinful, shameful, and displeasing to God. The author of Ephesians says that “everything exposed by the light becomes visible.” We are called to speak out against the darkness in our society and to stand up and be counted on the side of light.

Now we are called to expose the works of darkness not to make ourselves look good, and not to look down our noses at others with a self-righteous attitude, but rather so that those in the darkness can be redeemed by the light. The author of Ephesians says, “Everything that becomes visible is light. Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” In other words, the light of Christ has the power to rescue and redeem those in the darkness.

By exposing the darkness and shining the light of Christ into the dark places, we can be agents of healing and reconciliation. And this is the fourth thing that it means to live as children of light. Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount that his followers are “the light of the world.” We are called to take the light of Christ into the darkness of the world and let it shine so that others can see.

Today we are ordaining and/or installing the newly-elected elders and deacons. To those of you being ordained and/or installed, I remind you that you are the officers of this congregation, and as such, you are called to set an example of what it means to live as children of light. Elders are the spiritual leaders of the congregation, and deacons form the core of the pastoral care givers. Therefore, I charge you to live as light and to take the light of Christ into the darkness of the world, letting that light shine in the darkness through you.

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus healed a man who was blind. The man was born blind, and he also started out in spiritual blindness. Jesus healed him not only physically, but also spiritually. Indeed, one of the most significant things in that long narrative is the progression of movement from the man’s spiritual darkness to his becoming a child of light. When the man was first asked to identify the person who had healed him, he said simply, “The man called Jesus.” But the next time he was questioned about this, the man answered with more conviction: “He is a prophet.”

Later, as the man continued to move out of his spiritual darkness and into the light, he boldly defended Jesus to the Pharisees, proclaiming that anyone who could heal a person born blind must be from God. And finally, when he encountered Jesus again face to face, the man was able to make his full affirmation of faith as a child of light: "Lord, I believe." On each step of his pilgrimage of faith from darkness to light, the man was able to see more clearly than before. The closer he got to the light of Jesus, the more he found himself standing in that light as a child of light.

All of us, as baptized Christians, are children of light. Our job description is (1) to try to find out what is pleasing to God and then do it, (2) to associate with the light and avoid the darkness, (3) to expose the darkness, and (4) to shine the light of Christ into the darkness so that those who are spiritually blind may see the light of Christ. May we all live as children of light.