

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Ephesians 5:8 to 14 NASB
Lent 3 March 23, 2014



⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ For this reason it says,

“Awake, sleeper,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.”

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Wake up! When Pastor Kassebaum and I were in the village of Uruk Uso in Nigeria at about 4 in the morning – at the first light of dawn – the roosters would crow! It was kind of like a snooze alarm. We didn’t get out of bed that early – but you would lie there and think about your family back at home in America – and about the lesson you were going to teach. Wake up! How do you know when to get up? If you were a farmer you can hear the cows that want to be milked. If you are a shepherd – the sheep wake you up! If you have a little baby – they wake you up in the morning. There is an alarm clock that wakes you up with the smell of bacon. That’s a nice thought – but a big disappointment – if real bacon doesn’t follow. There is an alarm clock that wakes you up – and then you have this little dart gun – you have to hit a target to make it stop. And there is an alarm clock – all padded with carpet – with little wheels on the sides. When it

starts to make this really obnoxious noise – it also starts to roll all around your bedroom – so you have to get up – to catch it – to turn it off. Hit the snooze button is not an option! Wake up! Wake up! Some people are it seems quite naturally perky, perky, perky morning people and some people not so much! Today God’s Word talks about waking up spiritually!

Wake up, O Sleeper!

I. Once we were darkness

II. Now we are light in the Lord!

The part of God’s Word we are talking about today – from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the believers in the Turkish city of Ephesus! Context. Context. This is the paragraph that talks about the surrounding situation. Remember Paul’s missionary journeys? At the end of Paul’s 3rd missionary journey he went back to Jerusalem. There some very orthodox Jews attacked Paul – falsely accusing him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple – a terrible offense! People started pushing and shoving. It was getting ugly. Finally Roman soldiers came to restore peace – and Paul – a Roman citizen is now caught up in the Roman legal system. If there was one thing Romans understood it was law and order. Paul spends the next two years in prison – while a corrupt Roman ruler – hoped for a bribe. Finally to move things along – Paul appealed to a higher court – the Supreme Court – Caesar himself! It is while he is under house arrest in Rome – quite literally chained to a Roman soldier. It was here – that Paul wrote letters to Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Paul’s mission plan was simple. Paul would go to the synagogues – telling them the good news that all Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus – conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary – suffered under Pontius Pilate crucified, risen and ascended – the living Christ – their Savior from sin and death. Eventually – the synagogue would split – those who believed in Jesus and those who rejected Him – clinging still to the Old Testament Scriptures alone! The Apostle Paul spent some 3 years preaching the Gospel of Christ Crucified in Ephesus – the longest he spent in any one place like that! The Letter to the Ephesians is filled with some of the purest Gospel in all of God’s Word. Every confirmation student learns Ephesians 2:8f **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one**

can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

In chapter 5 Paul writes: **⁸ for you were formerly darkness...** Listen very carefully. You **were formerly darkness**. That's a step past being in the dark – to be darkness – and so? We have been in the dark. At a party and the host wants you to feel welcome – and they want to show generous hospitality – so they make you a drink – a strong drink – and they come around every little bit and say – "Let me freshen that for you!" And they do that again and again. And if you cover your drink and say, "No thank you!" And still they take your glass and pour in some more! Or you want to sit with co-workers and visit – but they gossip about whoever isn't at work today. And you realize – when you aren't there – the people who gossip with you – will also gossip about you and that's all wrong! Or there are friends who play video games – like Grand Theft Auto some #--and it's violent – and bad language and sins against the 6th commandment and so? Or you play sports – and people on your team want to tell you – even teach you how to not cheat – but to sort of bend the rules – and not get caught – to intimidate the other team and then you win! That's being in the darkness. When Paul says **⁸ for you were formerly darkness**, we are the darkness. We are the cause of the darkness. We are the one who makes it dark! We are darkness if we are the one who shoplifts from Shopko or Walmart or Pick 'n Save or the Piggly Wiggly. We are darkness if we get the cigarettes – if we get the beer or the brandy or we get the drugs – the pot or more.

⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light *consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth*), We used to be the darkness – but now we are the Light in the Lord – the light – the exact opposite. **(for the fruit of the Light *consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth*), goodness – righteousness – truth.** These are fruits of faith. They are not three things you need to work on so that you do more good – do the right thing and tell the truth! Fruits of faith will happen in our lives – because the Holy Spirit fills us. It's like apple trees make apples. It's what they do! The apricot and the pear tree in my childhood yard made apricots and pears! Our fruits are evidence of the faith that fills our ♥s! We were driving

down the Indiana highway – when a car passed us – just a little past us – the guy – passenger in the front seat – rolled down his window and threw out a whole bunch of fast food he had decided he didn't want to eat! Now that's just not something you do – when Jesus' love colors your thoughts, attitudes and behavior. You just don't! Drive through Indiana – and what do you see? A barn that had huge white letters that say – “Do good to everybody all the time!” That's nice – but it's pretty much Major Burns to Major Houlahan, “It's nice to be nice to the nice!” It's a sign about niceness! Better the painting on the side of *Karl's Trucking* semi trailer that says, “God delivers us from evil!” I like that. God delivers us from evil. That's what Jesus did when he sacrificed himself for us. We went past a Heating, Ventilations and AC Shop. They had one of those signs where you have big cards with letters. It said, “I serve my Risen Savior!” That's pretty clear, too, isn't it? The man who is in charge of fixing your furnace is fixing it for Jesus! It doesn't matter where you work or what you do. What matters is that you do what you do because Jesus' love overflows your heart and colors everything you think and do and say!

“Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.” There are some really neat serenity sunrise sunset alarm clocks. Fall asleep naturally and wake up peacefully with these alarm clocks – that duplicate the dusk and darkness of night and the beautiful light of the dawn of a new day! They cost \$69 to \$75 to \$165 – in case we think much more expensive must be much better! It's difficult if not impossible to fall asleep or stay asleep if your heart is burdened by worries, troubles from sin and guilt. It's nearly impossible to sleep if our mind is racing about the painful past or a fearful future. The good news is – Jesus holds the future securely in his nail marked hands. When we remember Jesus' love, his wisdom and power – we will wake up to the spiritual danger all around. We will put on the full armor of God. We will spend each day focused on the work Jesus has blessed us to do. The Apostle Paul's encouragement to the Philippians will be concrete in our life: **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with**

thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6,7

Walk as children of Light! `Friday was fragrance day. I will never forget my friend Mrs. Rose. She would send cards that were fold out 3 dimensional – very delicate – with a rose fragrance – so you know you got one – by simply opening your mail box! Very sweet! Yesterday was national goof-off day. Did you eat Cap’n Crunch in your jammies and watch cartoons? Today is national chip and dip day – tomorrow chocolate covered raisins day and Tuesday pecan day and waffle day – who’s up for pecan waffles? There’s a new Muppet Movie out. I love Kermit – *it’s not easy being green* and Miss Piggy. It’s almost opening day for the Brewers and the Cubs. It’s Lobster Fest at Red Lobster. If you don’t know Jesus as the Lord of your life – that’s about all you have – eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we all die! It is only by the grace of God – that we know Jesus died and rose again to save us. By grace alone we know we are forgiven. Once we were the darkness – now we are in the warm light. **Walk as children of Light** – until we are home in Heaven. Amen!
To God alone all glory! Rev. Anthony E. Schultz