

Children of Light

Ephesians 5:8-14

Most of you are aware that when the wind storm of a few weeks back came through my Detroit neighborhood Leroy and I were some of the 99,000 homes without electrical power. We lost most of what was in our freezer and refrigerator; but what we missed the most was light and heat. Our power was out for the majority of 5 days. So we thought a great deal about light.

According to the scripture we just read, “now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light – for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.” So the question for you today is what kind of light are you?

There are candles, birthday candles, candles for light, candle that make the room smell good, some people use candles during their prayers and devotional time. The reason we use candles in our worship is to show God’s presence as the center and audience of our praise and thanksgiving. So maybe you are a candle, reminding us to celebrate events or centering us on the presence of God in our midst.

Maybe you are a hurricane lamp. Before Edison invented a light bulb that should burn for more than a few seconds, our fore-parents used these lamps to light their rooms, especially in the winter months. They were used to see what was in front of them. These lamps were used to read by in a dim room, to do one’s homework, especially since there were chores to be done while there was still daylight. So maybe your task is to shine light as a hurricane lamp as a child of light.

Maybe you have been called to shine as a table lamp. Sometimes we don't need the bright lights in the ceiling and just need a specific area to be bright for reading, sewing, crocheting, or the like. This light illuminates a special space for some task. It does not interfere with the light the television or computer, it gives just the light needed for the space being used. So maybe as a child of light you are called to be a table lamp.

Maybe you are called to be a nightlight. I think that light had two major purposes. One is to reassure children and adults who are afraid of the dark that day is coming, that there are no monsters under the bed or in the closets. In Peter Pan the night lights were to protect the children from spirits that would steal them away in the darkness. The other purpose for night lights is to protect parents of young children from injuring themselves as they rush to the aid of an injured or frightened child. So some of us children of light may be given the tasks of reassurance and protection.

Maybe you are a street light, one that illuminates the community. These lights show us our way when you have to be out late at night. They show us our surroundings, whether there is an item blocking our way in the street, or how to put the key in the house door, or if there are any persons around that might try to do us harm. So maybe you are like a street light in our role as a child of light.

Maybe you are a traffic light. These are some of the most important lights for public safety in our major cities. They show us by changing colors who had the right to drive through an intersection, who had the right to walk and who must stop and wait their turn. The colors green, yellow and red have meaning for most of us....although I have noticed that not everyone understands that they must obey the lights. We understand how important they are when the lights don't work properly and five cars go through an

intersection without regard to the rule that we treat intersections as 4-way stops in such situations. So maybe your job as a child of light is to be a traffic light.

Maybe you are the chandelier. You know those beautiful lights that illuminate a restaurant or ballroom. The light puts people in the mood for intimate fellowship or festivity. They give off just enough light for the experience, but they also give beauty to the occasion. So may your job as a child of light is to be the chandelier.

Today's reading comes from a passage that earlier began, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us" (5:1-2). Because of our faith, we are to "live as children of light" (5:8). The reading is followed by ethical injunctions about relationships of Christian husbands and wives; children and Christian parents; Christian employers and their workers. "Everything exposed by the light becomes visible" (v. 13). We are to "live as children of light" (v. 8). However, such a spirit of openness can occur only within community.

In therapy—individual or group—one shares personal stories to receive responses from other perspectives. This wider vision allows the person to see more clearly and begin to grow personally in new ways. In Christianity, the gathering and sharing of a diversity of views through General, regional and district assemblies is a means for discovering new insights or reaffirming received truths. Inclusion of many different perspectives is critical if the Christian community is to move toward the truth that has come to us in Jesus Christ.

The critical characteristic of the Christian community, the community of children of light, is that it is led by the Spirit of Christ. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). This Spirit

above all is a spirit of love. The community led by the Spirit will welcome the stranger and outcast, honor the importance and worth of every member, and provide a culture of acceptance that invites dialogue. Such a community provides the foundation for the pursuit of truth.

At its best, the worshiping fellowship provides Christians with a recentering that begins to bring light to our darkness. As we surrender our lives and wills to God, there is a loss of egoism, a destruction of the core of self-concern. Discovering a community of mutual support where a person not only survives but thrives through serving others, we no longer feel threatened and alone. Secure in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God known through Christ Jesus, though still afraid, we are no longer controlled by fear of the loss of possessions, position, or even life. We remember the story of Jesus and rediscover our identity as children of God, as children of light, as people who are worth dying for. True worship results in transformed people who act out of genuine concern for others and for doing the will of God. From within the community that honors the dignity of every human being, we are free to listen carefully to the other, free to express our understanding, and free to find the new understanding that somehow bridges the division and moves toward truth.

As children of light, humility is the fundamental personal quality required to be part of such a community of mutual concern and openness to truth. Humility is founded on the premise that our basic value rests on our common humanity. Each person is beloved of God and therefore of ultimate worth. Humility provides the foundation for listening to others. Humility empowers one to speak the truth boldly, but always with the reservation that it is the truth as perceived by the individual, not the ultimately correct insight. Humility provides the motivation for patience; through dialogue, in

community, with time, truth will emerge, differences will be resolved, and the community will be healed and empowered to move into God's future.

Ward B. Ewing

Maybe you are called to be a spot light to show what God would have us do in our families, church and community. So, be children of Light and do the task you have been given to do. In the case of each of those lights mentioned earlier, its task is to be bright; bringing happiness, cheer, liveliness, optimism, positive feeling; bringing an atmosphere that is upbeat, shinny and perky. We must not allow our lights to be dim; which causes vagueness, blurriness, haziness, faintness, unclearness and shadows.

As I read this passage of scripture it reminded of my friend from United Christian Church of Detroit. Her name was Maggie Thomas and for many years she served as Sunday School teacher, deaconess (she was the one who enjoyed fixing the communion), and at the time of her death at age 90 she was serving as an elder. She would explain that when she was young she was a child of the darkness. But when she had a relationship with Jesus Christ she became a child of light. Her goal was to be a better child of light than she had been a child of darkness. Her favorite song was “This Little Light of Mine.”

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, this little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Ev'ry where I go
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, ev'ry where I go

I'm going to let it shine
Ev'ry where I go
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

My God gave it to me
I'm going to let it shine
My God gave it to me
I'm going to let it shine
My God gave it to me
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

I'm not going to make it shine
I'm just going to let it shine
I'm not going to make it shine
I'm just going to let it shine
I'm not going to make it shine
I'm just going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

You are children of light! SHINE!

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