

Sermon: Darkness and Light

Light and darkness (and particularly the interaction between them) are ongoing themes in the Holy Scriptures. In the very first book of the Bible, we read: "Darkness was over the face of the deep. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light"

In Christianity, God's light isn't just physical illumination but symbolizes his divine nature, which is absolute holiness, truth, wisdom, and presence, contrasting with the darkness (sin and evil). It represents guidance, salvation, and spiritual understanding, with Jesus as the ultimate "Light of the World" who reveals God's glory and calls believers to shine his light through righteous living, reflecting his purity and love.

The holiness and purity of the fact that God is light, means he is perfectly holy, pure, and without any moral defect or darkness. His light exposes what is hidden, revealing truth, understanding, and God's wisdom, allowing us to see things as they truly are.

Following Christ (the Light) means moving from a state of darkness (sin) to a state of light (righteousness). Christians are called to become light by reflecting God's character (love, compassion, truth) and shining for him in the world, glorifying God through good deeds. Walking in the light involves confessing sins and allowing God's truth to illuminate and transform one's life.

And with the coming of the Christ the relationship between light and darkness was conclusively defined. It is clear from the verses before us this morning, as well as from many other New Testament passages, that darkness and light, especially when you are speaking of spiritual darkness and light, are by nature opposed to one another.

The apostle Paul warns the Corinthian believers: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” (*2 Corinthians 6:14*) and then he illustrates his point by asking a series of rhetorical questions: “For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (*2 Corinthians 6:14, 15*).

It is clear from this that darkness and light are more than just things or even ways of living. They are more than mere metaphors for bad and good behavior. They are, in fact, two different realms or kingdoms that are engaged in spiritual warfare with one another. These two are the kingdom of the “Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah 9:6*) and that of “the rulers over this present darkness”.

You cannot be in a part of both Christ’s kingdom and evil’s kingdom. You are either a child of darkness or a child of light. We were, from the moment of our conception, children of darkness because of the original sin that we inherited from our first parents

But the passage before us impresses upon us the fact that God “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (*Colossians 1:13, 14*) and it goes on to explain how that transition has changed our very nature and how that change ought to be evident in the way that we live our day-to-day lives.

In the text Paul tells his readers (including us) that we have been set free from Satan’s kingdom of darkness. This is what our Savior Jesus Christ has accomplished for us in His life of perfect obedience and his sacrificial suffering and death. Because he lived the perfect life under God’s righteous Law, He broke the hold that sin had over all of humanity. No longer are we slaves to sin because Christ has broken the bonds that held us. Sin no longer has any power over us. We are not bound to sin

anymore but are now free to live the life that God intended for us from the very beginning.

The Law of God still demands perfection, and we are still far from perfect but the One who stood in our place under the Law was perfect for us. The Law's demands on us have been fully satisfied for us in the perfect life of Jesus.

Because Jesus suffered the penalty for sin in our place, we are judged not guilty by the God and Judge of all. The Savior's resurrection from the dead proves it. And because we have been brought to saving faith by the power of His Spirit in the Gospel, we have been brought into His kingdom of light.

Conversion to Christ is commonly seen as a transition from darkness into light. That's why, at the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, a candle is lit and presented to the newly baptized with the words: "Receive this burning light to show that you have received Christ who is the Light of the world. Live always in the light of Christ, and be ever watchful for his coming, that you may meet him with joy.

Because we are children of light, we are to "walk as children of light." That means that we are to reflect the light of Christ in the world. The Lord who said: "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (*John 8:12*) and who also told his disciples: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (*Matthew 5:14-16*).

We have been saved in order that we may serve God by serving our neighbour. Christ has brought us into his kingdom of light so that we might be his light in this world of darkness and sin.

There are times that I think we kind of miss the step on this one. If the truth be told, we are often a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution, yet really don't let that light show us the way.

But the Good News is that it is not up to us to be Christ's light in the world; he is the light that shines through us. It's not always easy for him to do that but he does it nevertheless, forgiving us of our failings and workings, often in spite of us, to bring about his good and gracious will in us and through us for the benefit of others.

The light of his redeeming grace can and does shine through the thickest darkness--even the darkness of our own sinful nature--to give us forgiveness, life, and salvation and to shower those gifts on others through us.

The darkness of this world is not compatible with the light of Christ. It never has been, and it never will be. Jesus said it himself: "This is the judgment: The Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil".

Jesus, by his perfect life and innocent suffering and death, has delivered us from the darkness of sin and death and has brought us into the light of his grace and glory.

His light continues to shine through us, of all people, as his spirit uses us to shed the light of his Gospel on everyone with whom we interact so that even more of those for whom Christ suffered and died may be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and brought into his everlasting kingdom of light. Amen.