

March 19, 2023 – Ephesians 5:8-14 & John 9:1-41

This past Wednesday, as part of our Lenten series, I preached about light and darkness. About the physical light that God created on the first day of creation. About the separation of that light from darkness into periods of day and night. And about the value of that separation on our physical wellbeing.

I also preached about spiritual light and darkness. And about the separation of that light and darkness, not into day and night, but into a kingdom of light and a kingdom of darkness. About how, Jesus, the light of the world, has made us each children of light by our baptism into his death and resurrection.

And I spent quite a bit of time discussing this exact passage from Ephesians that we have before us today. But there was one section of it that I really didn't cover. And it's an important one. Important enough that I'd like to revisit this passage and take a look at that section.

The section I'm talking about is verses 8 and 9: *“Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).”* You see, having been brought into the kingdom of light, having been made children of light, we now walk in a different way. We walk as those who can see.

It's like the blind man in our Gospel lesson. As a blind man in the ancient world, he was basically useless. I'm not trying to insult blind people today. It's a completely different situation. We have all sorts of different ways of accommodating for blindness that they just didn't have back then. Blind people today are extremely useful to society.

But a blind man in Jesus' day just couldn't do very much. And so this one did what most blind people did: he became a beggar. He lived with his parents and he sat at the Pool of Siloam begging those who passed by for money. It's all he could do to contribute to the household.

Being able to see again didn't just restore his sight, it restored his life. Now he could get a job. He could help his parents. He could get married. He could do all sorts of things. Anything he wanted to, really. He had gone from living in darkness to living in light.

And so now we go back to what Paul says. Walk as children of light. Bear the fruit of light. The works of darkness are unfruitful. To be a Christian and yet live in darkness is to be like that blind beggar by the pool. Useless to the Kingdom of God. You are a child of light. You can see. So go and work. Go and be productive. Go and bear fruit. The fruit of light.

But what is that fruit? Well, Paul tells us that as well. He says, *“the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.”* Now, those are three interesting adjectives to use.

Because, at first glance, they're kind of synonyms. They're all very positive, holy, godly things, after all. And it's easy to blend them together as all meaning the same thing. But they don't all mean the same thing. They each mean something a little different. So let's examine them.

What does it mean to say that the fruit of light is found in all that is good? What is good? Well, Jesus once asked a similar question. A man came up to him and addressed him as “good teacher” and Jesus immediately stopped him and asked, *“Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”*

Goodness is a divine attribute. It's something that defines God's existence. He can't be anything but good. Which kinda makes it sound like he's limited in that respect. As if the devil can do something that God can't because he can be evil. But that's not the case.

It's not that God is confined by his goodness. It's that goodness is defined by God. That which God does is good. God can do anything, but God only chooses to do some things. And the things that God chooses to do are – by definition – good. And the things that God chooses not to do are – by definition – evil.

Why does this matter? Well, because the things that God does are always good. Which, in our sinfulness, we don't always like to admit. We like to be in control. We very much want to be like God, knowing good and evil. Deciding what is good and what is evil.

We have our pet sins, our vices, our corruptions that we desperately want to convince ourselves are good. We know evil is wrong. We don't want to do evil. But if we can twist evil into good in our own minds, then we won't have to call ourselves evil.

But, in the process, whenever we do that, we will inevitably be saying that God is wrong. That God isn't actually good. Which just doesn't work. God is good. God alone is good.

The fruit of light is found in all that is good. Including God's Law, which says that you are not good. You have sinned. You have fallen short of the glory of God. And so the fruit of light is confession and repentance. Turning to the goodness of God and saying, "You are good. I am not."

Which leads us to our second fruit of light. When Paul talks about all that is right, he's not really talking about all that is correct. He's talking about all that is righteous. Which does have a sense of correctness to it. But it's more than that.

Righteousness in this sense is very much a legal term. It has the connotation of being innocent of a crime. Of being declared not guilty by a judge. Of having a clean criminal record.

Which, again, is not something that we have as sinners. We are not good and so we are condemned to death and hell as sinners. And so saying that we are children of light and yet also saying that the fruit of light is found in all that is righteous... that's kind of a contradiction.

Except it's not a contradiction. We are righteous. We are declared righteous. We are given a righteousness that is not our own. We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ himself.

You'll notice that, in regards to this fruit, Paul doesn't tell you to create the fruit of light. He tells you to find the fruit of light. Look for all that is good and right and true and you will find the fruit of light.

That's because you can't create your own righteousness. You can only find the righteousness that God has given to you. It's his creation. His gift. His work.

And you? You're like a blind man who can now see and discovers that all around him are fruits that he never knew were there before. But he now gets to enjoy the feast of eating them and sharing them with others. The fruit of light is found in all that is right. All that comes from Christ's righteousness given to you.

And the fruit of light is found in all that is true. You know, a few hours before Jesus was crucified, he stood before Pontius Pilate and had a rather deep spiritual discussion. A discussion about truth and following the truth. And Pilate scoffed at the very word. "What is truth?" He asked.

Well, what is truth? There's actually an entire field of philosophy dedicated to answering that one question. It's called epistemology. And it's interesting what epistemologists have found.

Because it turns out that communicating truth is very much related to identity. How you identify something is crucial to making true statements about it. If I hold this pencil up and say that this is a chicken, I have made an untrue statement. But it's untrue primarily because you and I both know that the identity of this object is a pencil, not a chicken.

Now, that's not necessarily the case if you are blind. If you are blind, you don't know the identity of this object and so you don't know if it's a pencil or chicken. And so unless you find some other means by which to identify it, you have no truth.

And that was exactly where Pontius Pilate was. He scoffed at Jesus talking about truth and asked, "What is truth," because he had no truth. He was blind. He was walking in darkness. Nothing had any identity apart from the words he assigned to the things he could see right in front of him, which was not the kingdom of God.

And the world today operates a lot like Pontius Pilate. It operates without truth. Because the people of this world are blind. They are walking in the dark. They have no truth.

And so it's no wonder that the world redefines things every day in ways that are patently untrue. Redefining marriage. Redefining what is a man and what is a woman. Redefining what is love. Redefining what is good and righteous. When you are the blind leading the blind, you can call anything whatever you want. Because nobody knows what is true.

And that is why it's so important that we walk as children of light. Because we are not in the dark anymore. We are not blind anymore. Our eyes have been opened. Christ has shined on us. We can see.

By the light of Christ, by the light of His Word to us, the truth is made visible to us. We're not just making things up anymore. We have an objective reality presented to us. A reality in which God became man and died for us that we might live again. That the sleeper might awaken and arise from the dead and walk in the light of the Lord for all eternity.

And so we cling to that truth. Let the world call a pencil a chicken. Let the world call a man a woman. Let the world call evil good and good evil. They will do their shameful things in secret. They will do their shameful things in public. We will take no part in those unfruitful works of darkness. And when they try to make us, we will expose those works for what they are.

No our primary goal is to do as Paul said: try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Because he is the only reality that matters. We will walk as children of the light, finding the fruit of light in all that is good and right and true. Knowing that by the goodness of the Lord, we are not condemned, but made right with Him by the one who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life: Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.