**Ephesians 5:6-21**

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. **7** Therefore do not become partners with them; **8** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), **10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **11**  Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. **12** For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. **13** But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, **14** for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” **15**  Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **16**  making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20**  giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21**  submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**“Christ Shines On You”**

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Walking is a fundamental part of life. Babies eagerly pursue after it by first crawling all over the place. Braces, canes, and walkers show the demand we have to put one foot in front of the other. For all the advance form of transportation today, walking is still the most reliable and routine way we get around. In our Scripture readings, Joshua was preparing to walk with Israel into the Land of Canaan. Jesus was walking in Capernaum with the crowd proclaiming Himself the bread of life. St. Paul reminded the Ephesian Church how the Gospel had walked into their midst by his preaching the Word to them.

Walking implies movement, but it is not always in the right direction. Israel after settling down in the Promised Land walked away from serving the Lord. When facing the identity and the need for faith in Jesus alone many disciples stopped following Him. St. Paul also knew the Ephesian Christians could walk off into a life that would be empty of God’s grace. They experienced firsthand this apostle among them for over three years. Now writing from prison in Rome, Paul had concerns about how the body of believers would continue to walk in the Lord. It is the same for the baptized today, in a world of darkness there is only one way to go. Walking in the light of Christ is the promise we have as the children of God.

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” There was nothing safe for Christians about the city of Ephesus. It was pinnacle place of worship for the goddess Diana also known as Artemis to Greeks. The temple dedicated to her there was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Bible Dictionary 88). Such false delusion over God came with deceitful teachings and empty lives darkened by sin. This was no less for the Ephesian Christians at one time, but Christ’s light shined on them.

Walking around in circles is the useless way of a sinful world. Whether it was the Amorites in Canaan, a city like Ephesus entangled with a false goddess, or a secular society that today denies God. The world continues to walk in circles no matter the direction it tries to go. There is plenty of deceiving words and glorified lives of sin, but remember what our Lutheran Fathers knew well. They state, “The Scriptures flatly call natural man in spiritual and divine things darkness… “ (SD Art II). It means without the Word, without the light of Christ, without the gift of baptism people are walking around in sin and death. Rather than conforming to the Old Adam, we are to have no part in such unfruitful works and even expose them.

“But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” St. Paul is not talking about exposing things like he did in the past as a Pharisee. The Ephesians knew God’s Word not only exposed the darkness by the Law, but the light of Christ had come to redeem their lives by the Gospel. Jesus never had unfruitful works in His life, so even His cross became a most fruitful place for sinners. Jesus did expose the darkness, but His will shined with the love of being the sacrifice. Baptism made them children of light and they were to see the world differently with Christ in it.

Walking straight requires eyes that see Christ before our lives. The false teaching of tolerance today is no longer tolerant to Christians. Let alone lots like to boast about not being judgmental, but that is only a self-righteous pat on the back. If the baptized are to, “discern what is pleasing to the Lord.” If we not only need to avoid sin, but also expose it. This happens no other way than by the light of Christ. His Word is truth in terms of Law and Gospel, but it can also be an offense. When His light shines to make things visible, we might end up seeing our own sinful hypocrisy. Do we then deny the Law’s work? Do we reinterpret God’s Word? Do we preach a Christ that has no cross? No, we return to our baptism. It is to repent and believe in Jesus. Forgiven and fed by Him, He lets us extend the same light of love to broken lives and weary souls.

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” St. Paul proved by his letter to the Ephesians that even while in prison. He had opportunity to use the time wisely to write to them. Likewise, they were to not look lightly upon the times for they were evil. In other words, much immorality, sin, and wickedness was opposing the body of Christ in Ephesus. Yet, opportunities would come to put the times to good use, since the darkness did not overcome Christ. Walking as children of light was never foolish but to say like Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Gathering before Christ by Word and Sacrament meant melody in the heart, a good witness to confess, and thankfulness in everything.

Walking with wisdom means confident trust always in Christ. The days are evil and such evil unopposed grows. To ignore it or pretend that it will go away misses the opportunities we have left by God’s grace. Our baptism cries out today not tomorrow or at the end of our life. Luther tells us how to take advantage of the times, “To ascertain this, go to the Creed and the Ten Commandments… Begin with yourself; then pray for the Church. Let it be your desire that God’s name be everywhere sanctified and that your life conform to his will” (House Postil Vol. 4 p. 323). The worst case is that we walk off as those half-hearted disciples did with Jesus. To abandon the faith lets darkness reign as if there was no light, which is a lie.

Christ did not abandon His walk to the cross when all left Him. He does not abandon us in our time, but walks with truth and love by His Word and Sacrament. There is forgiveness for whatever darkness or doubt has taken hold of us. There is light that shines with brightness of life built in the way of the cross. There is salvation that invites all to see the will of the Father given in His Son. Christ shines with joy enough for us to sing thanks to God and encourage one another forward. Walking in the light of Christ is the promise we have as the children of God. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.