

First Sunday in Advent

Text: Isaiah 2:1-5

Theme: Let us Walk in the Light of the Lord

One of the worst things about this time of year is how dark it is. It's dark when many people leave for work and dark when you get home. In the summer on Thursday evenings, I love it that it is still light when church is over. Then slowly it's dark by the time that church is over. Now it already dark for a couple of hours when church starts.

The Bible often makes a contrast between light and darkness in comparing them with righteousness and sin. In these verses we have God's admonition to walk in the light of the Lord.

I. What are the "latter days" that Isaiah speaks of?

The Old Testament often speaks of the "latter days." This is the time from Jesus' birth through the second coming. It is the entire New Testament era until eternity. We are now living in that time, which will culminate when Jesus returns.

Here are some of the things that Isaiah writes about this time: Mount **Zion will be established** as the chief of all the mountains in the world. Jerusalem is considered is where the most holy event in the history of the world occurred. It is the place that Jesus died and rose for the forgiveness of our sins and where the Holy Spirit was poured out of the church. The greatest act in the history of the world occurred here. Jesus reconciled us with God by His innocent suffering and death on the cross. Since that time the Gospel has been preached from Jerusalem to the whole the world.

Isaiah writes that **people of all nations** will flow into our Lord's church. That was one of my biggest impressions of Israel. There were people from the entire world who gathered in this place to see the places where our Savior walked, to meditate on God's Word, to sing, and to pray. When Jesus returns, Revelation 21 describes how he will bring the heavenly Jerusalem where people of every nation, people, tribe and nation will stream in through gates of pearl.

Isaiah goes on to write that He **will teach us His way and we will walk in His paths**. Many people will give up their sinful ways and walk in God's light. I'll look at more of that in a minute. Finally Jesus will return. He will **judge the world in righteousness**. He will be fair and just when all nations are gathered before Him and He judges the world.

Best of all when He gathers His people there will no **longer be any war or conflict** We will all live in peace and perfect love for all of eternity. Isaiah write that swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. War and any conflict will be a thing of the past when Jesus returns.

The latter days is the time when the Savior accomplishes our salvation, the Gospel is spread and believed, and when Christ will come to gather His people in Paradise.

II. During these days we as Christians want to stay away from the deeds of darkness.

Christianity changed the world in the New Testament era. Concepts like compassion and mercy were unheard of in many cultures, let alone prized. Even religion was nothing like our concept. Some of the most immoral acts were committed at the sacred places of many religions. In today's epistle lesson St. Paul describes the works of darkness. He mentions: orgies and drunkenness, sexual immorality and sensuality, quarreling and jealousy. He tells us to make no provision for the sinful nature or to gratify its desires.

And yet, we as Christians are tempted to walk in the dark ways of the world. We are tempted to do them in secret, hoping that no one will know. Jesus told Nicodemus, *"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."* (Jn 3:20) Everyone struggles with sinful thoughts and desires. Far too often they become evil deeds. With Paul we often lament, *"The good that I would that I do not, no the evil that I would not, this I do."* But this is not who we are as Christians. St. Paul writes in Romans 6 that we have died to sin. As much as we struggle with temptation and sin, we don't want it to overcome us.

III. Our desire is to walk in the light of the Lord.

In the Old Testament God called His people to be holy. They were to be different from the other nations. To teach them what He expected, He gave them the 10 Commandments. When the other nations heard these commandments and saw Israel live according to them, they noticed that there was something special about this people. They were called to be holy and righteous.

As Christians we also want to walk in the light of the Lord. That begins with confessing our sins and looking to Christ who is the light of the world. When we come to the light, it exposes our sins, but we confess them, and Christ cleanses us from every one of them. He makes us pure and righteousness by faith alone in the salvation that Christ accomplished for us on the cross. The book of Hebrews speaks of this text when it says, *"You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven....to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant..."* (Heb 12:22ff) As Christians we walk with Jesus Christ as our Savior. We walk in the light of His salvation.

We also walk in newness of life. Jesus was blunt when He said, *"Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."* Part of walking in the light of the Lord is that we avoid the deeds of darkness, but there is more. Paul calls on us to live in the fruit of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* We want to love and forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us. In heaven there will be no war or violence. We are called to already live in that peace and love already on this earth as the people of God. As we walk in His light and His ways as He has given them to us in the 10 Commandments, we do so to His glory and not our own.

In a world that can be very dark, we are called to walk in the light of the Lord. Flee sinful temptation. Trust in the forgiving love of our Savior, and love another as He has loved you. That

is basically what it means to be a Christian that we cast aside the dark ways of sin, and walk in the love of our Savior Jesus Christ,

May God grant that we all walk in the light of the Lord.

Amen.

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