

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Seventh Sunday after Trinity, August 3, 2014

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 535:1-5, 238:1, 80, 372, 47.

Lessons: Psalm 36, 1 John 4:7-21, John 1:1-14.

Sermon Text: 1 John 2:9-11.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you remember who you are? Do you know what Scripture calls believers? ***"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*** (1 Peter 2:9) All who believe are no more in darkness of sin, wickedness, unbelief and shame, but you have been called into Christ's kingdom.

The Word of God is compared to light by Peter: ***"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."*** (2 Peter 1:19)

The message of salvation is brought into the world as light. The Word of God itself has abundant references to light, and the light that God brings to mankind. Scripture tells us that God said ***"I have made you (meaning the Jews) a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."*** (Acts 13:47)

We read Jesus' command to Paul: ***"I am sending you to [the Gentiles] to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."*** (Acts 26:17-18)

Scripture makes it clear ***"that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."*** (Acts 26:23)

As we today read John's discussion of living in light, let us ask

ARE YOU IN THE LIGHT?

1. **Jesus is the true light.**
2. **The one who is in God's light loves his brother.**
3. **But *"whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him."***

John has been writing about light and darkness in this letter. ***"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."*** (1 John 1:5)

Now he elaborates on that and makes it a very personal, subjective matter: ***"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him."***

We must remember that Jesus Christ is the true light. ***"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)*** When he healed a blind man, he said ***"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*** (John 9:4-5)

Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Savior, is the light that lightens the world. You heard in our Gospel lesson: ***"In him[that is, in Jesus,] was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."*** (John 1:4-5)

Jesus' kingdom is contrasted with that of darkness in Colossians where we read of ***"the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light."*** (1:12-14)

Paul writes to Timothy that God's grace has ***"now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."*** (2 Timothy 1:10)

Because Jesus is light, and he brings light, and he brings mankind out of darkness into his marvelous light to believe the Gospel, we know that ***"Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble."***

2

We can't really see love itself. It is an emotion, an act of the heart. A person either loves or hates. And indifference is really hate. Love is an emotion, but the results, the fruits, the outgrowths of love can be seen. We read of the fruits of love in First Corinthians chapter 13: ***"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."*** (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) And in Galatians we read: ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."*** (Galatians 5:22-24) So the fruits of love, the results of loving can be seen.

When John writes ***"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness"*** he makes reference to Christian brothers. John uses the word "brother" as a synonym for God's beloved, God's little children, that is, members of the community of believers.

If a person professes to be a Christian, men have a right to expect a corresponding conduct from him which agrees with the will and character of Christ; conduct which shows brotherly love. So if brotherly love is absent, hatred really exists. And if there is evidence of hatred, it shows that such a person is still in darkness. He does not really belong to Christ. Faith and hope have no place in his heart. Where a person has and shows real brotherly love, not the cheap imitation which is so often mistaken for genuine love in our days, such a person is and remains in the light of God's grace, with faith and love in his heart. Being in the light, he is not in danger of stumbling into pitfalls which the guile of the devil and of evil people may place before him. And how many pitfalls and stumbling blocks don't we find in the world!

Later John writes very sharply: ***"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."*** (1 John 3:14-15) He repeats that idea again later: ***"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."*** (1 John 4:20-21)

The brother, the believer, abides, lives in the light. And in such a true believer there is no cause for stumbling. He has a self-less regard for others. Taking care not to stumble into sin, and also not to be the cause of another's stumbling into sin, he shows love.

Jesus himself talks about walking in the light at the death of Lazarus and he makes this point: ***"A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light."*** (John 11:9-10) The King James Version tells us there that when a man walks in the night ***"There is no light in him."***

When Paul writes to the Romans he makes the point that love is the fulfilling of God's law. Listen: ***"The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now***

than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:9-14)

John writes later in this letter: *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."* (1 John 3:16-18)

He has just told us *"But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him."* (1 John 2:5) So the one who truly loves his brothers really lives and walks in the light.

3

But contrast the one who really loves and shows love with these words of Scripture: *"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness."* John repeats that with greater emphasis: *"whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him."*

The Lord cannot stand pretense, deceit, hypocrisy. If any person has hatred toward his brother in his heart, then his entire life, everything that he does and seeks to do, is in the darkness of unbelief and in the darkness of a false love. He may attempt to do what genuine Christians are doing, but because the light of faith is not found in his heart, anything he tries to do has no worth in the sight of God so far as true sanctification is concerned. Because the eyes of his understanding are not yet enlightened and because he cannot make any God-pleasing judgment in spiritual matters, all his efforts are futile and they lead him nowhere except to eternal damnation.

Just as we can't really see love itself, we can't really see hate itself. It too, is an emotion, an act of the heart. A person either loves or hates, whether he shows feelings of hatred for another or not. To fail to love is itself to hate. We can see the fruits of hate, the results of hating. These are acts such as saying and doing wicked things. They are things such as the deeds of darkness we just read about from Romans. Hatred can show itself in looks, words and behavior. So hate can be a very active, corrosive force in life, affecting not only the one being hated but also the one doing the hating.

But hate can also be passive. To emphasize: one writer said "To fail to love is itself to hate." If one neglects to do deeds of love, that is, in essence, hating. Hate and love are incompatible. Luther wrote "To love your brother it is not enough not to hate him; you must also do good to him."

So remember, all who believe are sons of the light and sons of the day. Live in the light and love one another! That is a command from God!

After Paul had written about judgment day, he addresses believers, brothers in these words: *"But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."* (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11) Yes, encourage one another in every way you can! Love one another! Amen.