

Live in the Light

✦ **Delivered from darkness (vv.1-4)**

✦ **Encouraging and edifying each other (vv.5-11)**

In the name of Christ, our Light, dear children of the light:

What would you be thinking right now, this very minute, if you knew for sure that right after this service the last trumpet would sound and you would be standing before your Almighty Judge? Would it make any difference how you would listen to this sermon? Would such a sudden end to your life on earth and your entrance into eternity make you ashamed for something last night or this past week? Would memories of your youth rise up to terrorize you just sitting here waiting? We will see a light so bright on the Last Day that nothing will escape its blaze. Past and present, our innermost thoughts and feelings – all will be revealed. There will be nowhere to run, no place to hide. And there is only one escape for that Day. This hour, this moment in time, before eternity crashes upon you, dear friend, **Live in the Light**. To give you courage and show you the Way, let me share what God has done for you to be...

✦ **Delivered from darkness (vv.1-4)**

A week ago many Americans kept saying, “I can’t wait until this election is over. We’ll know the outcome and no more political ads.” By Tuesday night, nearly half the country was deeply disappointed, while a majority were dreamy eyed with glee. Yet nothing in these or any other elections can dispel the **darkness** inside a single, solitary soul. With all the worldwide attention on the next American President, does it not make you wonder why there is so little concern about the end of all things? Why do we ignore the most important outcome of our times and the dawn of eternity? Why are we not asking ourselves and everyone else the real question: “What will you do in the end?”

A few years ago I asked a man in Wyoming, Minnesota, that very question. So he told me where he planned to move after that neighborhood. “What about after that?” I repeated. “What will you do in the end?” So he told me about his retirement plans. “But after that,” I tried again, “What will you do in the end?” “I see what you’re saying,” he finally realized. And then I told him the message here.

“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

Too many religious leaders have tried to explain *“about times and dates”* with far too many listeners willing to sell their possessions and sit on a hillside waiting for the end that is still to come. How could they believe preachers claiming to know when Jesus Christ Himself in His State of Humiliation told His disciples: *“Watch out that no one deceives you....No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”* (Matthew 24:4,36-39 NIV) Only Noah and his believing family were left behind to survive the Flood safe with God in the ark of God’s promise and blessing.

Has there ever been so much talk of *“peace and safety”* as the 200+ years of American history? Some citizens get so excited to end the wars that God says will continue right up to the end of time. One of my elderly Seminary professors, Dr. Becker, told us about his college roommate during “The War to End All Wars.” “The Bible must be wrong,” his classmate insisted. “It says the elements will melt with

fervent heat. Well, streets can't burn!" he shouted. Only a few years later the streets were burning all over Europe under firebombs from both sides in the Second World War. Not once since Christ foretold the End has war ever ceased on this planet. **"Peace and safety"** are found in Christ alone.

"You, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief." Countless times in the past and again today God keeps calling you His **"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 NIV) **"Darkness"** reigns in the guilt of sin. **"Light"** rules in the hearts of all who put their faith and trust in Christ alone. Jesus says, **"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 NIV) And in His *Sermon on the Mount* our Lord also says, **"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."** (Matthew 5:14-16 NIV)

Jesus is the Way to **Live in the Light**. By Christ's holy life in our place, by His innocent death in our place, He has done the impossible for all people. Truly we are **Delivered from darkness**. For you personally by His treasured water of Baptism He has raised you up from the night of sin to **Live in the Light**. Now we wait in eager anticipation, as our Lord's Apostle Paul urges all Christians to be busy...

✠ Encouraging and edifying each other (vv.5-11)

Since our Lord Jesus delivered us from the darkness of sin and unbelief, He wants our lives to show that we **Live in the Light**. **"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."** Every sinful human being wants to hide in the darkness as if God will not see. But whether we're under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or we find ourselves controlled by selfish thoughts, stubborn ways or loveless attitudes, the answer from God is always, **Live in the Light**. Let the dear Holy Spirit shine the light of God's law into your heart though it pains you deeply to disappoint your God and Savior again and again. God alone can free you of guilt. God only wants to help us admit our sin in order to appreciate the awesome Good News that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood washed all our sins away.

"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." God is setting us up, but not for *wrath*. God's *wrath* is coming on every sinner who wants to stand alone in his own righteousness instead of the underserved merits of Christ. Truly, God does not want anyone *to suffer wrath*. So He kindly set up Christ as our sin, so that **"in him we might become the righteousness of God."** (2 Corinthians 5:21) Christ alone makes us worthy to receive His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and the free salvation that it brings.

Your heart may skip a beat thinking of Jesus as Judge today. "What about my evil words to my husband?" "What about my harsh answer to my wife?" "What about my disrespect of parents and teachers?" "What about all the people I failed to tell about Jesus? Millions of babies dying because I fail to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves?" In this fight of faith only the **"hope of salvation"** can shield your head like a **"helmet."** Only the **"breastplate"** of **"faith"** in God and **"love"** from Him can protect your heart from guilt and shame. Put these on as you trust in God's forgiving grace. Then **"self-control"** will keep you living **in the Light** as a soldier of the cross.

"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." Living or dying, Jesus wants us to **"live together with him"** now and forever. Can you think of a better way to live in worship after this service? If God gives you a new lease on life today, get busy **Encouraging and edifying each other**. **Live in the Light** and look forward to Jesus as Judge on your side. Amen.