

Live an Honorable Life

- ☆ **God's chosen people.** (vv.9,10)
- ☆ **Just passing through.** (vv.11,12)

In the name of Christ Jesus the Light of the world, dear fellow lights and salt of the earth:

Some of you who have been listening to New Life sermons for many years, question: Would it be safe to conclude that this preacher is in favor of people stumbling around in their house in the dark? I've never preached against it, so does that mean I'm for it? Not once have I warned about too much salt in your diet. So does that mean I'm in favor of sodium overload? Ridiculous? Sure, but these are the kind of conclusions folks will make about preachers who do not address hot topics in the news. Amazing conclusions and judgments based on silence. Long ago a man in our parking lot condemned my patriotism and Christianity for refusing to distribute his voters guide to the congregation. This is one reason why it's so encouraging when members and listeners contact us preachers to ask questions. Even in Bible Class it's hard to get as specific as desired. Civic tests are nothing new. Early Christians were commanded to prove their loyalty by simply sacrificing to the emperor. Their refusal to honor anyone as God except the God of the Bible got them a martyr's death to beasts and gladiators in the arena before cheering, jeering loyal citizens. God has a higher goal not just for preachers but for all Christians of all ages. This world is passing away. We can't solve all its problems. We can **Live an Honorable Life** as...

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It's easy to get so wrapped up in the news we forget who we are. Families divided by matters no one can solve, all dependent on who you listen to. Young Christians can forget their parents lived through history you've only read about. Parents may be dismayed when children come to different conclusions. Don't let opinions override your faith. The Bible is the only source of eternal, unbiased truth. Trust God.

Do you sometimes feel unloved? God says, "***You are a chosen people.***" Do you ever feel useless? God says, "***You are a royal priesthood.***" Does cultural turmoil tear at your heart? God says, "***You are a holy nation.***" Do you sometimes feel you just don't belong? God says, "***You are the people who are God's own possession.***" Does your life seem pointless? Here's God's job for you as His ***own possession***: "***That you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.***" If you're a first generation Christian, doubt and fear may be fresh in your memory. You may still feel the pain. You certainly appreciate where God has brought you through His holy Word: "***At one time you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy.***" You are among the mercied ones to whom God has shown an extra measure of patient love.

That's not always pleasant, is it? We have to hear about our sins as God's kindness leads us to repentance. Loved ones get sick and die. Isolation crowds your sense of wellbeing out into bitter cold. If we're honest, has there ever been a time when we're not prone to worry about finances? We so easily set our hearts on earthly things. Any wonder we get so disappointed? In our youth things like wealth and education and relationships and position can look so promising, like the large gift-wrapped present one pre-teen boy saw under the tree with his name on it. Eager unwrapping only revealed a snow shovel. Who wants that? And yet that's how older Christians feel looking back on a marriage that didn't go as planned. A career that did not satisfy. Popularity that never brings peace.

When we forget that God's goal for His **chosen people** is to "***proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,***" we miss the one thing needful that can bring true

peace to our souls. After visiting dear family members how can you still feel lonely? How can young people feel so lost in a crowd? Why do earthly dreams melt faster than snow? It's because every human heart is a God-shaped vessel. Nothing but God can fill it. Not great blessings like family and friends. Certainly not addictions to alcohol, drugs and pornography.

Only God can fill your heart with the one thing your heart truly needs: This truth that God has loved you by name from all eternity. This truth that God planned your eternal salvation. This truth that all God's promises came true when Jesus came and lived and died and lives again for you personally. Just one of God's promises remains outstanding. Jesus who came the first time to suffer and die in your place and mine, is coming again to take us home to Himself in heaven. That is the one outstanding promise of God yet to be fulfilled. And that is our priceless hope as God's **Chosen people**, *"Therefore, as God's elect, holy and loved."* As God fills your heart with peace through His Word and sacraments, He gives you clothes to keep you warm in every age and climate of life's little day. All this so you can *"clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."* (Colossians 3:12 EHV) Sometimes you just need to wait on the Lord for your feelings to catch up with your faith. Be like Jacob in your prayers: *"I will not let you go unless you bless me."* (Genesis 32:26)

☆ **Just passing through. (vv.11,12)**

For anyone from warmer climates Minnesotans can be a mysterious bunch. How can they bear to walk the dog when it's below zero? One man said, "It's not so bad if the wind would just die down." Sometimes you see the leash, but the dog's not there. Too cold. The master has her little four-legged friend in her arms and the leash is just dragging. How can Minnesotans bear such extremes? Are you kidding, on a bucket in the middle of a frozen lake? "Ice house"? Do you know how strange that sounds? Similar questions could be asked about the concept of camping. Bugs, storms, cold, hard ground. Why?

You know! Everything mentioned here is just for a little while. The dog will get back inside where it's warm, while man and beast thaw together. Her little friend helped keep her warm; she'll be glad to warm up inside together. Minnesotans don't live on frozen lakes – not past March anyway. Camping builds character and bonds families together in shared suffering. That's gotta be good, right?

It's all the concept of God's grace to us today to just remember this in the midst of trials and frustrations. We are **Just passing through**. None of this is meant to last, but it sure makes you look forward to our Father's home of light, that rainbow-circled throne of Jesus, the ultimate joy and heartwarming peace of God the Holy Spirit when our spirits are wrapped up in heaven's glory. *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV84)

Jesus says, *"You are the salt of the earth."* Salt preserves, purifies, and stings. *"You are the light of the world,"* trusting in Jesus as *the Light of the world*, your Savior. *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and temporary residents in the world, to abstain from the desires of the sinful flesh, which war against your soul. Live an honorable life among the Gentiles so that even though they slander you as evildoers, when they observe your noble deeds, they may glorify God on the day he visits us."*

Just passing through while living an **Honorable Life**, Christians leave a trail of blessings. Slandered in ancient pandemics, Christians would scoop up sick pagans thrown out by panicked relatives, and heal them in the first hospitals. Christian masters freed their slaves and educated them. Lutherans in the South welcomed blacks to worship and supported them as pastors and missionaries as well. One owner returned after a deadly Indian uprising to find her home and brewery untouched; she had been meeting their canoes by the river with food and clothing for years. Kindness goes a long way. You are the mercied ones **Chosen** in Christ. Let kindness overflow your heart in an **Honorable Life** of love. Amen.