

***“Live as Children of the Light”***

[The video, “*Light*” was shown after the Scripture Reading.]

The image and experience of light is a common, everyday occurrence. It is easy to take it for granted until something goes wrong with the light and a bulb needs to be changed or a fixture replaced or shade found or protection applied against the sun’s burning rays. As that video, the Scripture Reading, and the sermon title suggested, this message’s focus is on “light”, so you may get tired of hearing that word. However, we are not examining just any light but a very special light!

Sharing some background about our Reading, many Biblical scholars believe the Letter to the Ephesians was written later than the Apostle Paul’s letters. They think the author of Ephesians had a copy of one or more of Paul’s true letters and copied some of the concepts found in them. The argument goes, the Letter to the Ephesians was written by someone, who was likely a supporter of Paul’s theology, and who used the apostle’s name to gain authority for his message. Now, I do not agree with that scenario. There were no copying machines or even printing presses, so it would have been very difficult for an individual to have obtained copies of Paul’s true letters for personal use. Also, if the Letter to the Ephesians was not written by Paul and was actually intended for that church, how would the true author know enough about that congregation to hope it would meaningfully address their problems and concerns? No, I am inclined to believe the author was the Apostle Paul.

Another piece of background, which I believe is helpful in our examination of the special “light” Paul was discussing, deals with the fact Ephesus had connections with both Paul and the Gospel of John. Although many Biblical scholars believe the Gospel of John was written much later than Paul’s letters or the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, some of the Gospel of John scholars see considerable accuracy in the Gospel of John on historical details about Jerusalem, other locations, and Jewish practices, which would only have been known by someone, who lived in those locations before and during the time frame when the other gospels and Paul’s letters were written. Paul and the Book of Acts indicate the Apostle had a close relationship with John, the youngest, original disciple of Jesus. Adding together the facts of Paul’s closeness with John, the connections their writings each had with the Church at Ephesus, and the commonality of their use of the image of “Light” in both Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians and John’s Gospel, it is my belief our Reading from the Letter to the Ephesians demonstrates Paul’s awareness of how John described the connection between Jesus and Light, at least in the early oral stages of John’s Gospel.

The later portion of the video was based on some of what the Gospel of John revealed about the “Light”, Jesus, and his followers. It declared, “Jesus is the Light of the World – follow him and you will never walk in Darkness but will have the Light of Life.”

The early part of the video listed some of what its creators understood as the things light does, such as, “Changes everything – it illuminates the darkness and what’s hidden – guides our steps and leads the way out of the darkness.” As I noted earlier, the makers of the video, then went on to connect Light with Jesus and his followers. Although the video did that, its description of what “Light” does was basically limited to what any light would do for someone in the dark.

Before moving on to specifically consider what Paul said in our Scripture, let’s look at what the Gospel of John reported that the “Light” did or does. Jesus explained it to Nicodemus in John 3:19b-20. He told him the Light had come to humanity but human beings love darkness instead of him – the Light because of their evil actions. People, who do evil hate him – the Light and stay away from him – the Light because he will illuminate their evil.

As we consider what Paul wrote the Ephesians in our Scripture Reading, it seems to me that he was aware of Jesus saying the type of things which I just mentioned from the Gospel of John. Paraphrasing the Apostle, he pointed out to the Ephesians and us that we used to live in the darkness – we did not come to the Light. However, now that they and we belong to God and Jesus, we live in the “Light”. We are called to live, in such a way, so those who observe us, know we belong to the Light. When everything is exposed to the Light, the Truth about them is shown. Going through such an experience makes us expressions of him – the Light.

Paul began Chapter 5 of his Letter to the Ephesians by referring to the believers in Ephesus and us as God’s Children. The actual Greek word in verse 8 means “Children”, so it literally reads, “*walk as Children of Light*”. How do we live or walk as Children of Light? Obviously, we need to put our trust and faith in Jesus Christ and thus come to “The Light of the World” – God’s Son. We then need to live in “The Light” – follow Jesus’ way of obedience to the Divine Parent’s sacrificial and suffering love. That means we treat other persons with respect and care – manifest God’s Radical and Extravagant Invitation and Welcome to anyone needing forgiveness, healing, love, and New Life. That we defend the weak and work for justice and the wellbeing of all people. It means you and I significantly and faithfully return for God’s Purposes some of our light – our talents, skills, time while we are part of these Children of the Light at Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ.

This closing video, in part, refers to what Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount and suggests some of what you and I can do that with our portion of “The Light”. [The “*Your Light*” video was shown.] Amen.