

## Children of the Light

St. Mark Lutheran  
Three services

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*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6*

It seems that many people just cannot help themselves. Every few years, we hear about it again: someone predicting when the world is going to end. Some people even go as far as predicting the month and the day.

I found a list of predictions of the end of the world on the internet. They fall into two categories: religious and scientific. Even many scientists are interested in this. There are individuals that make predictions and there are groups. The religious groups usually tie the end of the world in to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The web site that I quoted had predictions from ninety-three different references, all of which contradicted each other. The scientists offered a great number of possibilities, but they centered around how the earth is going to end.

But the informed Christian should not waste time being fooled by individuals or groups such as these. We have the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to guide our thinking. The disciples asked about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world, and Jesus gave this answer recorded in Matthew 24:36: "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." So you would do well to mark this down somewhere, so that you might give a proper response if you are ever asked about the subject.

The Apostle Paul said, speaking to brothers in the faith at Thessalonica, "For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness."

The concepts of "light" and "dark" are used often in the Holy Scriptures, so we should not be surprised to see Paul also use that imagery. What is meant by it as used here? It is really very simple. The "children of light" are those with faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Those of the "darkness" are those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

It just makes sense to use "light" and "darkness" to illustrate faith or lack of faith. In the dark, not only can't you see where you are going, you cannot see any danger that is around. You simply do not know what is out there in the darkness. By contrast, in the day, all can be seen. You can see where you are and what's around you. If danger comes, you can see what the options are to try and avoid it.

One has much more confidence if one is walking in the light. One knows who he is, knows where he goes, and knows where he'll end up. He knows the gifts that God has given him in his baptism and that he belongs to God. I have often had new Christians ask me if they can know for certain that they will go to heaven when they die. In my personal witnessing presentation, I assure them that on the basis of the Holy Scriptures they can know. In 1 John 5, the Apostle John writes, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God..." (verse 1). Then in verse 13 John writes this: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may KNOW that you have eternal life." John is talking about "children of the light" here.

But for those who do not know the Lord, those who are living in spiritual darkness, it is the absolute opposite. The Apostle Paul writes that "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." (verse 2) The only certainty for the people of the darkness is uncertainty. They not only don't know when the world is going to end, they do not know where they will be going when their life is ended. Their life's end is likely to be sooner, and they are not prepared for it.

Now Paul does address the normal inquisitive nature of people who wonder when Jesus might return. In the last couple of weeks, we have given some attention to the details of 1 Thessalonians 4 and other passages which address this. Rev. Gary Piepkorn, a LCMS pastor in New Mexico, writes that he believes that Paul addressed this question for two primary reasons. One is that because of our sinful nature we don't want to trust without having some concrete evidence. So God gives us some of the details about the end, but they certainly do not include anything like the day or time.

The second reason Paul addresses this question about the return of Christ is that if we knew, then we could live as we want and sort of "clean up our act" just before the Lord returns. There is a tendency in perhaps all of us, to think and do that which pleases us and not God. If we knew the Christ's Second Coming would not be for some time, we might well lapse into a lifestyle that is less than honorable. But God has work for us to do. Being children of the light should change what our life is all about. One should no longer live for self, but for the Christ who saved us, and for the people whom God wishes to touch through us.

That's why Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5 today, "Concerning the times and seasons brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you..." What we do know is quite enough. By not knowing all of the details, we can then focus on what REALLY counts.

The two things that REALLY count are, first, that we believe-strongly believe-that God has made us "children of the light". He did so by redeeming us, burying us back, from the consequences of our sin. Paul reinforces this with his words in our reading today when he says, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him." (verses 9-10)

The other thing that really counts is that by not knowing the day or season when Christ will return, we can just let Christ live in and through us. Indeed, by letting Him be our life, those around us will see us as significantly different from those who live without the light. Being "children of the light", we are also "children of the Heavenly Father", who devised a plan by which all the sins we ever had or will commit have been removed.

While the world is certainly in a sorry state today, with every indication that it may get worse, we must not forget or compromise on who we are. This world would be even a darker place without God's "children of the light". We are to be lights to the world around us.

Praise God for having come to us to make us "children of light". Praise God for forgiving us and living in and through us to bring hope to a darkened world. Praise God for revealing to us what is to come in our next life. Praise God that he kept his promise and sent a Savior in the person of Jesus Christ. Yes, we have so much for which we should praise God. Thus, we say again, all praise be to God, from whom all blessings flow. Amen.