

"THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

Sermon Text:

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12 (KJV)

Dear Children of Light,

Less than 200 years ago, there lived in Germany a man by the name of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He was, even by today's standards, one of the greatest thinkers this world has ever seen.

Goethe lived in a so-called Christian society, was raised in the Christian religion, and made the usual profession of Christian faith during his early youth. In his late teens he studied law in Leipzig, became interested in painting and literature, and wrote poetry and dramatic plays.

He later made in-depth studies of occult philosophy, astrology, alchemy, music, art, anatomy, chemistry, and architecture. He was, by all accounts, a very enlightened man; for he possessed great earthly wisdom of the ways, the feelings and experiences of man such as few men ever had before or since.

However, the cost he paid for such worldly enlightenment into the passions and emotions of man was high. In his quest for worldly enlightenment he forsook the True Light of the world and on his death bed it is reported he cried out: "More light!".

You see, as death neared, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, one of this world's best minds, found himself enshrouded in darkness, devoid of true intellectual, moral and spiritual light.

About 4000 years ago in a far eastern country inhabited by mostly unbelievers, there lived a man who Holy Scriptures describes as perfect and upright, as one who feared God and shunned evil. God had blessed him with a large family, material wealth, and many friends.

But under His divine providence, God allowed Satan to take these blessings from Job.

Job lost most of his servants, his cattle and camels to murdering thieves, his sheep to fire from heaven, and all his sons and daughters were killed as they sat eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house when what is described as a great wind collapsed the house down upon them.

And as Satan attacked Job's entire body with horribly infected sores and Job's own wife urged him to "curse God and die.", yet did Job lift up his voice and exclaim: "I know that My Redeemer liveth!"

Two thousand years ago, in Jerusalem, there lived a just and devout man by the name of Simeon. Simeon believed the promise of the Messiah and it had been given to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And led by the Spirit into the Temple when the parents brought in the Christ Child to do for him after the custom of the law, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God and said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

Dear Ones, these three instances show forth the truth of the Words of Jesus in our sermon text when He says: "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Job, surrounded by an unbelieving people, has the sure hope of his promised Savior, a faith which lays firm hold of the promise of the coming Redeemer from sin and eternal death. In the middle of all his suffering and impending death, Job has the light of life.

Simeon, with the Christ-child in his arms and saving faith in his heart, gladly walks into the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil, because he has the light of life.

But Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, surrounded by Christian communities, possessing all his worldly enlightenment, is, in the face of death hopelessly lost in darkness because he is without the light of life, Jesus Christ.

Dear Ones, the world without Jesus Christ is in complete and utter darkness.

In spite of all its scientific knowledge and worldly philosophy, despite of all the great minds and innovative technology, without Jesus Christ, the world is in intellectual darkness.

For it cannot understand man's true origin, his aim, nor his end.

It cannot know the true nature of God's love for sinners, nor can it begin to grasp the Grace of God in Christ, which makes of all who believe heirs to a glorious mansion in heaven prepared for them before the very foundations of the earth were laid. For only Jesus sheds that light.

Without Christ Jesus, the world is in moral darkness.

Yes, man's conscience does indeed bear witness to the Law of God written in man's heart.

However, because of the sin of the first Adam, which brought the just and righteous condemnation of God upon all men, the sins which all men commit under wicked self-delusion and the subtle workings of the Devil, that Prince of Darkness, man's conscience is fatally flawed in its understanding and right application of God's Law in his life.

One need only to pick up a newspaper, watch the T.V. news, or honestly examine oneself in the light of God's Holy Word to know that this is true.

Every law of God, as well as every law of man, is violated whenever and wherever it serves man's selfish evil lust for power, fame, material wealth, or sensual pleasure.

Today, the simple manifestation of selfless Christian love for one's own neighbor and friends is apt to bring harsh ridicule.

And the notion of loving and praying for one's enemies? Why, that would be pure foolishness!

The Bible-based sense of justice, compassion, and mercy are deplored and any Christian who solemnly refuses to compromise any Truth of God's Word for the sake of political correctness or a false sense of peace is held in vile contempt. Righteousness is reviled and the filth of sin is deemed desirable.

In such utter darkness, this world will certainly perish. It cannot be otherwise.

For without Jesus Christ, the world has no real knowledge, nor even the slightest perception of that righteousness of thought, word, and deed which only comes from the presence of the Light of Life, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the world without Jesus Christ is in spiritual darkness.

We read in First Corinthians 2:14,

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

The world is, therefore by nature, spiritually blind. Without Jesus, the world cannot discern, cannot believe, the things that the human eye has not seen, nor the things that God has prepared for all that love Him.

Only Jesus Christ, the Savior of the whole world, can shed that light of discernment and understanding into the mind, heart and soul of all sinful men, thereby making us children of light.

This is accomplished in us by the working of His Holy Spirit, through the hearing of His Holy Word and in the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Born anew, then, as Children of Light, by Grace Alone through Faith Alone in Christ Jesus, we bring forth the good fruits of Christian faith.

Yes, Jesus is truly the Light of the world.

It is out of realization of this fact the prophet Isaiah, in view of the coming Messiah, shouts to his people:

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

(Is.60:1-3)

As our Lord Jesus is the Light of the world, shouldn't we continually strive to live in that Light?

Since Jesus, Himself, exhorts us in John 5:39 to: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye know ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me," shouldn't we daily be active students of that Word?

Just as we cannot live our natural physical lives without the natural light of the sun our Almighty Creator-God gave us; how can we possibly believe we can live our spiritual lives without Jesus, the Light of the world, revealed to us in Scripture?

We need Him.

We need our Bibles.

Now, then, as Jesus is truly the light of the world, shouldn't we, who have been called out of the horrible darkness of sin and death by the marvelous light of His Gospel, gladly show forth the praises of Him for such great and tender mercies?

Dear Ones, the time is short, the day of the Lord draws nigh!

As Jesus alone can shed the light which brings true enlightenment and healing to a world enshrouded in intellectual, moral, and spiritual darkness, let your light so shine forth among men, that they might see your good works and glorify God.

Rise, Thou Light of Gentile nations, Jesus, bright and Morning Star;
Let Thy Word, the gladsome tidings, Ring out loudly near and far,
Bringing freedom to the captives, Peace and comfort to the slave,
That the heathen, free from bondage, May proclaim Thy pow'r to save.
(TLH 498 v.1)

Amen.

And now may the Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, walking as children of the Light. Amen.