

Spring Lake Presbyterian Church
Pastor: Rev. Kathryn M. Treadway
March 2, 2008

Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake!”

Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Fill Me With Your Power, Lord

I had the wonderful opportunity to meet a Presbyterian Elder this week, about your age, who winters down here, but doesn't drive out to Spring Lake Presbyterian because of the distance. He came by to share with me his story about how his life had changed since retirement. You see, he was a doctor, and figured that once he was retired that he would be able to settle in with his wife and enjoy his days according to his own schedule and whims. But God had other plans. As he was sitting in worship one Sunday, his pastor began reading the same scripture I just read to you, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” And he, who had gone to church every week of his life and had even been on some medical mission trips in his day, was suddenly called OUT of retirement. He woke up from his happy-go-lucky retirement and Christ began to shine on him.

This man will be coming to talk to us a week from Wednesday so I'm not going to tell you his whole story except to say that he just spent January in the Sudan on a mission trip through which he learned of the Christian minority there and even gathered around the table of some ruling Muslims to inquire how the Presbyterian Church can help people in that region. I will also say that during the warmer months he is taking classes at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. And as he shared his story with me, I sensed a real peace about him. I sensed that Christ's light was shining on him.

I look forward to retirement. Down here in Central Florida there seems to be a lot of hype about the non-working years. In retirement I would finally be able to live in one of those 55+ homes with a sea of others who are my own age. Retirement in FL makes me think a lot of camp – making friends, playing games (I've noticed that many of you all get to structure your days by where you plan to play cards!) and competitively hitting a little white ball around (that would be golf). Of course, there is the downside of retirement camp with the many extra trips to the “infirmary”, but again, at least you are there with your contemporaries, with people your own age! But I still have at least 30 years left before I can embrace retirement fully. In the meantime, I get to meet people like Elder Dan who took the time to speak with me this week, people who are apt to change my ideas about retirement.

The apostle Paul writes to the church at Ephesus to remind people of what they were while they were living in sin. The previous verses even list sins of fornication, greed, and “obscene, silly, and vulgar talk.” But even if we are free from these specific sins, it does not mean that we have awakened. We may still be living in darkness.

Many times we convince ourselves we are living in the light when we are, in fact, living in darkness. With modern conveniences, in the middle of a pitch black night we can flip a switch and expose all of the corners in our houses, covering up the fact that it is still night, it is still dark. We frequently live in the same way,

imagining that all is really OK with the way that we are living. We turn on the lights by attending church and doing good to others, but doing so only *covers up* the darkness; it does not do away with our own darkness, our own sin. We can't make amends for the darkness in our lives. We can't undo what has been done by doing more good than bad to offset the sins of our lives. The only way we can get out of the darkness is to wake up! To rise from the dead! So that the light of Christ can shine on us, bringing us out of our midnights.

We continue to sing every week, "Take now my life, let me live for thee, fill me with your power, Lord, change the world through me. This week we concentrate on the prayer that God will fill us with power. If we are serious about wanting God to fill us with power, then we must be willing to awake from our slumber and do God's bidding. We must be willing to place it all on the line – our time, our beliefs, our resources, our passions – and ask not what lights we can turn on to cover up the fact that we don't want to place it all on the line, but rather ask in all seriousness, "God, what do you want of me?" When we sing, "fill me with your power, Lord" are we willing to be exposed for what we are – people living in darkness? Or are we willing to awaken that we may be filled with God's light?

(Aside: for those under the age of 50 – a great image of waking up can be found in the movie, *The Matrix*. Neo was faced with the decision about whether or not he wanted to wake up to the reality of what was around him or continue walking around with his eyes closed to the grid within which he was living. Morpheus gave him a choice, just as God gives us a choice. Will we choose to awaken and allow the light of Christ to shine through us, will we allow God to do God's work through us or will we continue in our slumber, going about our daily lives as if we have power when in reality we are asleep in our pods, dreaming away the lives God has entrusted to us?)

With that in mind, I don't know that I need to look forward to retirement. For about the time I turn 65 (or 67+ as the case may be,) I won't need to do anything that I can't do right now. For then, as now, I must ask God to wake me up from my slumber and do God's bidding. There is no retirement from God's work.

We come to the table of the Lord today to receive what God has given to us. We come, with Christ at the head of the table, wanting to fill us . . . with power, with love, with light. And so as we prepare to receive the bread and wine that Christ alone offers us, I encourage each of us, "*Sleepers, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on us.*"

Amen.