



# Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

**“Not As Unwise But As Wise”**

*Ephesians 5:6-21*

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August 19, 2012  
12th Sunday after Pentecost

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## Collect of the Day

Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to know Your Son, Jesus, to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow His steps in the way that leads to life eternal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. We all have parental voices in our head – from early on, we’ve heard things like, “No! Hot!” or “Don’t cross the street, there are cars!” or “Don’t trust someone you just met.” The kinds of things that parents say to their children over and over until it becomes part of the things they think as they live. It’s what is part of what keeps us out of trouble most of the time. Much of Paul’s writings include such paraenetic advice. “Paraenesis is the dissemination of advice, exhortation, and/or recommendation. It advises Christians to pursue or avoid something, persuasion and dissuasion.” (*A Scriptural Analysis of Paraenesis* by Rev. George D. Cutler) As you are living a given way, it is strong encouragement to continue to live in that way, especially as a Christian. Such we have in our text.

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.” (vs. 6-7) There are those who talk the talk but don’t walk the walk. When people of the world don’t have their words and their actions match, we are to be in the world and not of it. This does not mean that we don’t ever have doings with those who don’t believe; it does mean that we are not to be connected more deeply with people who act in this way. This is the first word of wisdom and advice.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the LORD. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the LORD. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.” (vs. 8-12) Here is the dichotomy, the injunction to pursue one course of action and avoid something else. The Ephesians were gentiles, following pagan ways, sacrificing to idols, living lives that were contrary to what God would have them to do. This was darkness, stumbling around and not able to see. Is this any different than the worldly way found in America now, eating, drinking, using whatever we please with a continual desire for more? As Christians, we are exhorted not to live this way, but to live as children of light, being good, righteous, and true in everything we do. Such deeds of darkness are exposed by us leading a life worthy of our calling. How do we find out what pleases the LORD? By following the 10 Commandments as the third use of the law, as a guide. This is doing what God wants not to earn salvation, but to respond to it.

Paul then has a paraphrase of Isaiah 60:1:

“Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” From Isaiah:

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.” When the ancient writers used something in their writing, they did not necessarily quote things word-for-word. The general meaning here is the same, and Paul employs the verse with a New Covenant emphasis. Christ is the glory of the LORD that will shine on us, and it is because of Him that we rise from our death of sin both in this life and in the life to come.

“Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise (dissuasion) but as wise (persuasion), making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (v. 16) This one permeates everything we say and do as Christians. Everything we are considering saying, everything we are considering doing, is it wise, or unwise? What will be the outcome? What will be the perception in the world and among believers, and will it draw people to Christ? We live carefully, not afraid of making a mistake, but carefully knowing Who it is that we represent. Along with being wise, we are not to be foolish, but to understand what the LORD’s will is. Now that’s a tall order, isn’t it? Wow, if we knew what the LORD’s will was in each and every situation that would make a lot of decisions much easier, wouldn’t it? The thing is, in the middle ages, especially between 1095 and 1291 A.D., “Deus Vult!”, “God Wills It!” was the battle cry of the crusaders as they tried to reclaim the holy land for Christianity. After between 1 million to 3 million deaths, this had not occurred. It is doubtful that this was indeed God’s will. So how do we know what God’s will is? The first part of this is what is clearly revealed in the scriptures, both law and gospel. It is God’s will that we follow His commands and believe in the grace that has been given to us in Jesus Christ. In each situation we may encounter, we search the scriptures to guide us how to proceed.

“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery (dissuasion). Instead, be filled with the Spirit (persuasion). The scriptures never forbid partaking of alcoholic beverages, but there are ample warnings from the account of Noah after the flood through Proverbs (23:29-35) and on into the epistles such as this one about partaking such that we lose our ability to function. Being drunk only leads to other sin. Instead of being filled with wine or beer or other strong drink, we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This may be scary for Lutheran Christians that this exhortation is here. Imagine what that does with the people of God, being “under the influence” of the Spirit of God instead of only being ‘under the influence!’ Sure, we might do crazy things, but crazy things that change the world for Christ instead of things that don’t make sense.

“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the LORD, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the NAME of our LORD Jesus Christ.” Sometimes people think that there are different categories here of music, such as psalms chanted, hymns from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and church camp songs from the 70’s. Not really. This listing is more cultural. A psalm is Hebrew for “song”. A hymn, ὕμνος, is Greek for “song”. And a spiritual song is a song that is written about spiritual matters, in other words, also a song. So we are to use songs, songs, and songs in order to teach and bring forward the faith. All music can be used in service to the gospel. It was for King David (Psalm 150), it was for Paul, it was in the Reformation, and it is now.

So we give thanks to God, and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This is living as being wise. Whether it is Christians serving one another as this passage is talking about, or wives and husbands as the section immediately after is talking about, we lay down our lives for one another, serving other people before ourselves. This is the essence of Christianity. This is indeed living not as unwise, but as wise. Amen. Now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus from now until you reach life everlasting. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!