

St. Andrew's UMC, Sacramento
March 22, 2020
Ephesians 5:8-14
"Live As Children Of Light"

5:8 For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light-

5:9 for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

5:10 Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.

5:11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

5:12 For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;

5:13 but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,

5:14 for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

(Today, we ponder what Christians can do in the pandemic.)

Amazon is hiring 100,000 new people, and raising wages from \$15/hr. by \$2. Guess what? When people are stuck at home, sheltering in place, they go on-line shopping. This Covid-19 is making Amazon very rich for the foreseeable future. Too bad, I

own not a single share of Amazon 's stock.

Then there are small fries looking for quick bucks. A few people bought great quantities of face masks, and are selling them at outrageous prices. They gloated that they made tens of thousands of dollars. One of them is a guy who bought 17,000 bottles of hand sanitizer. He asked his brother to drive more than one thousand miles to stop by all the stores on the way and bought boxes and boxes of hand sanitizer. To his shock and disappointment, Amazon delisted his item. So he gave an interview to a news outlet, complaining that Amazon is preventing him from doing the public service, when the people needed desperately his products.

What is remarkable is that this guy did not have a shred of self-

awareness of how bad his action makes him look. He is basically announcing to the world that he is a gouger who is trying to make quick bucks under the pretense of doing the public service by selling his item at an outrageous price.

The unscrupulous people lose the moral compass, when they see an opportunity to make quick profits. They choose to take the course of action that will exacerbate the crisis even worse. To be sure, the fact that they are seeking to make a profit itself is not wrong. But the fact that they potentially endanger or imperil the health of countless number of people for their own, personal profit is reprehensible.

Also, making profits through hoarding the essential items and then gouging people at outrageous prices is plainly wrong, anti-American, and

inhumane. They are holding anonymous people hostage to their greed. If anyone tries to justify gouging with the deplorable rhetoric of "exercising one's freedom," then that 'freedom' needs to be vigorously regulated.

Here is a quotation that is mistakenly attributed to President Lincoln: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." No matter how gentle and just one may appear, once a person gets hold of power, the bottom line of the person finds its expression in the action. Out of the goodness of a person, the good end-result will be achieved through power, while out of the wickedness of a person, the wicked end-result will wreak havoc through power. Power magnifies the goodness or wickedness of a person.

Jesus did say this:

The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks (Lk. 6:45).

The action of a person is the outward expression of one's intent, no matter how long it may have lied dormant in the heart. When the opportunity strikes, it springs like a trap, and catches person in the act. No one can hide one's treasure in the heart. For anyone who is tried in the crucible, the true self comes out. Is it the slag, or the gold that the crucible produces?

Likewise, in times of adversity, what is in the heart comes out of the person. If the person carried noble things, what the heart produces glorifies the person. If the person harbored shameful things, what the heart produces

defiles the person. Jesus commented on this aspect, too:

²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person (Mt. 7:20-23)."

If you go to grocery store, nowadays, you will see empty shelves. This virus has struck fear in the hearts of regular people, and so many have engaged in hoarding essential consumer items. Not every nation falls to this mass-panic, however. It is possible to keep our heads together, and not add fuel to the mass-hysteria that is totally unnecessary and harmful. America is the richest country in the world, and there is no need to create a panic-stricken society

on top of the pandemic. If everyone buys what they need, and maybe just a little more, there would be enough to go around for everyone. And by becoming neighbors to those who are suffering, we could come out of this adversity like a shining gold out of the crucible.

The writer of Ephesians stated correctly: the child of light shines, when darkness falls. The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

We are going through an uncertain, perilous, even frightening, time. The collective behaviors of other people might influence us, and we might lose the bearing on our faith and compassion.

You are a child of light, if you have invited Jesus into your heart, if you have accepted the authority to become a child of

God (Jn. 1:12), and if you have produced the fruit of the light.

How would you like a flashlight that sometimes works, and sometimes not. How would you feel, if the flashlight failed to light up, when you needed to find your way out of a dark forest? How would you like to have a clock that keeps time some of the time? The car that starts sometimes, and sometimes not?

Our discipleship as children of light is expected to be consistent. No matter what happens in the world, the sun always shines. The children of light always shines, and shines even brighter, when the darkness falls around.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn. 1:4b).