

How many of you could run a mile in the dark if you had no idea where you were going? How many of you could walk that mile in the dark? As we all know, movement and darkness don't go well together. In our text, Paul encourages us to move, but, at the same time, he encourages us to walk in the light and not in the dark, in the light of Christ and not the darkness of our sinful self. As we consider his words of encouragement, we focus on our theme: Walking in the Light.

I. As members of the family of God, we are instructed to walk in the light. A. Yet, by our very nature, we are prone to walk in the dark. 1. We walk in the dark because it looks so inviting. When you take your kids or grandkids to the ice cream store, do they look around and say, "There's nothing here that I like?" Depending on their age, they want all of it. Our world is a lot like that ice cream store. Everything looks so inviting and everyone else, at least as near as we can tell, is enjoying all 29 flavors, so why shouldn't we? Because our world does such a great job of enticing, it's easy for us to say, "I think I'll walk this way" even when it isn't the best way.

2. We walk in the dark because we don't realize what we are missing. If a five-year old had his way, how many days a week would he eat ice cream? Ice cream for breakfast, ice cream for dinner, and ice cream for supper. Why? Because he doesn't realize what it will do to him in five years. As people of the light, we still find ourselves enjoying the darkness because we forget what's available by walking in the light. We forget about forgiveness, God's love, His presence, His care, and we forget about eternity. When everything we possess by walking in the light is set aside because we're intrigued by the present, we end up in the dark instead of walking in the light.

B. Since God graciously set us in the light, how do we walk in the light? 1. We walk in the light by walking cautiously. When an elderly person uses a walker, how cautious are they about their movements? Those elderly people can teach us a lesson about our faith life. Paul says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise." But why do we need to walk cautiously? Because the devil is always up to trouble. When you least expect it, the devil will create a hole to make you stumble. When you think you're cruising down the highway of life, he'll suddenly toss in a detour. Because the devil is alive and well, we must walk cautiously.

2. We walk in the light by making the most of every opportunity. What's the difference between waiting for life to happen and making life happen? Those who make life happen realize that every moment is a God-given opportunity to make a difference. Paul says, "Making the best use of the time." To each one of us, God says every morning, "Today, I'm blessing you with the gift of another day. Use it to the best of your ability. Use it to give Me honor and praise. Make this day your very best day. Live it as if it were your last day." As we walk in the light, we notice opportunities and, because of who we are, we make each of those opportunities count.

3. We walk in the light by seeking to understand the will of God. How many of you have ever tried to figure out the mind of a two-year old? Unless you're the parent, most of us have a tough time. Maybe she wants a drink. No. Maybe she

wants something to eat. Maybe she needs her diaper changed. Often, it's a guessing game for us. But the will of God is just the opposite. Paul says, "Understand what the will of the Lord is." Implied in that statement is the assurance that it's possible. As we walk in the light, we put forth our best effort to understand God's will and when we know His will, we know where to take the next step.

4. We walk in the light by seeking opportunities to be filled with the Holy Spirit. How many scoops of ice cream does it take to fill up a two-year old? Wouldn't it be wonderful if being filled with the Spirit were like eating ice cream? Being filled with the Spirit is a life-long task because we never get full. What the Spirit offered you yesterday isn't enough to keep you filled with the Spirit today. As we seek to fill ourselves with the Spirit, we gather here to be filled through His Word and Sacraments. And every day we ask Him to fill us with His Spirit so that we can do what He needs done. It's what we do as we walk in the light.

5. We walk in the light by making melody in our hearts. Ever been around someone who seems to be humming all the time? They're wonderful people to be around because their attitude is so contagious! Paul's words may sound a bit strange as he says, "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," but his point is clear. "Carry an attitude of praise, an attitude of joy, an attitude of pleasant melodies because, as you do, it will be contagious." In our pessimistic world, Paul encourages us to choose optimism, to choose praise and adoration because, as we do, life is more enjoyable for us and for everyone around us.

6. We walk in the light by always being thankful. What's one of the things we taught our kids when they were little? We taught them, "Please," and "Thank you." Paul writes, "Giving thanks always and for everything." As we walk in the light, Paul says, "Find a reason for thanks every day; be thankful even when you don't feel like it." What would happen if each one of us gave thanks always for the next twenty-four hours? The results would be simply amazing! Paul not only says "always," but he also says, "for everything." No exclusions; no exemptions. No "everything except." Always and for everything - it's how we walk in the light.

7. We walk in the light by working toward the same goal. Paul calls it, "Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." We all have our dreams. But above and beyond all our dreams is God's master plan, a plan that takes your dreams and your dreams and my dreams and, in a way that only God can do it, enables all our dreams to work toward the same goal. When our dreams are God-driven dreams, God enables those dreams to come true because those dreams are part of His master plan. When we choose to work together, then we realize that, as people walking in the light, we're all on the same journey with the same finish line.

8. I don't recommend running or even walking a mile in the dark. But God, being the amazing God He is, says to you and to me, "Walk in the light for as you do, I will always light your next step along My path!" Amen.