

Fruit of the light

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[0 : 00] We've been looking a little bit more slowly in recent weeks, but we're in verse 8. Verse 8.

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Verse 8. Jesus Christ in a certain way and we're asking or Paul is saying I insist that you live in a way that fits learning the Christ that you learned. So Christ and his cross is important. Walking is an important word so hence these walking people that crop up on the slides that you can see.

It's about walking. Walking is a steady sort of progress thing and he said don't walk as the Gentiles walk. Chapter 4 verse 17. He has said chapter 5 verse 8 walk as children of light.

[2 : 52] Translated live as children of light but it's really saying walk as children of light. He's interested in the steady calm regular progress of Christian people.

And the ideas that push us forward in this are a couple of things. The renewed mind. So he keeps on saying you don't think the way you used to think. You have learned Christ and you think a new way.

So he says for example in chapter 4 verse 23 be made new in the attitude of your minds.

So the way we think. And he also says quite a bit about putting off as it were the clothing that belonged to what we used to be and putting on as it were clothing of behavior of what we now are. And the themes that we're going to look at today are three. Number one the dramatic change from darkness to light which you might have picked up was in the song by Graham Kendrick. I think he referred to it once or twice. So changing from darkness to light.

[4 : 17] And second thing we're going to look at is this of fruit. Bearing fruit. That's in verse 9.

That's fruit in case you don't know what fruit looks like. Whoops. And the third thing that we'll look at is the function of light to expose and transform. So there's a searchlight and there's somebody caught in the searchlight and there they're shown up in that. And I think Paul goes further than saying it just shows things up. It actually has an effect to transform. So those are the three things that we're going to look at this morning. You'll see them along the line at the top and you can count your way through.

I'm afraid there isn't a good time to go to sleep. They're all sort of equally important. So I'll leave you to work that bit out. So chapter 5 verse 8 says, for you were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. And he's going to say walk as children of light. So this is the thought that he brings us about light. Let's do it a little bit at a time.

Paul, who's writing this, has a particular interest in the idea of light and darkness because when he was given his job to do, and I'm quoting Acts 26 verse 18, the risen Jesus said, I am sending you to the Gentiles, to the nations of the world. And he said, I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

I find it rather interesting that right at the heart of what Paul was ever told to do was, Paul, you're going to go and open blind eyes, turn people from darkness to light. So what does he mean about the darkness? It covers a range of thoughts. One of them is ignorance. So in Ephesians 4.18, he talks about darkness as linked with ignorance, doesn't he? They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. So they just don't know.

They're in darkness. The people sit in darkness because they just don't know. They don't know God. They don't know Jesus. They don't think Jesus is any relevance. And Jesus himself says, I have come into this dark world that the blind might see. Isn't that great? Jesus has come into the world to open blind eyes. And I don't know about you, would you say once I was blind, I didn't see

anything special in Jesus. I didn't see the point of any of that. I didn't see what God had anything to do with anything. But at some point, the same Jesus who wrote in this, of whom it's written in the scripture, he said, I have come into the world that the blind might see, touched my life, opened my eyes, and now I see. He took me from darkness to light. Darkness also is not just about ignorance, it's about power. And Paul uses the same sort of thought in Colossians chapter 1 verse 13, where he says, he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. We give thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. So this is darkness in the aspect of evil power.

[8 : 32] Which side was this guy on? Thank you. Just you and me on this, Julia. Yes, the power of the dark side. Yes. And so George Lucas used the idea of the dark side of the force to emphasize the power and the evil of the power.

So presumably, I'm not trying to tell you that the Bible got the idea from Star Wars, I'm saying Star Wars got the idea from the Bible. Satan's kingdom is sometimes referred to as the kingdom of darkness.

So it's not just that people don't know stuff, it's that there's a power of evil that blinds them and traps them and controls them. And he says to his readers, he doesn't actually say you were in darkness, Ephesians 5 verse 8, he says you were darkness. You were once darkness. And this is the Christian understanding of what it is to be without Jesus Christ. Not just in darkness, under the power of darkness, ignorant of who Jesus is, blind, but to be people that are actually so involved in that as to say you are darkness. That's what Paul says. And you might be thinking, well, hold on a minute, that's a bit strong. Is this true? That's a good question. Paul seemed to think that he could say to this to all of his readers, he doesn't say, well, some of you were darkness, others of you weren't actually. But he says, no, you were all in darkness. You were darkness. And perhaps we could put it this way. There are loads of people here who aren't in church. Some of them are very nice people, very caring people who do a lot of good things. Some of them are awful people. But for each of them, in the end, one would have to say, can you actually see who Jesus is? Because if you could see who he was, surely you would love him and serve him and fall down before him and offer everything that you do to him. Who do you see and who do you serve? And with a heavy heart, I have to say that, according to the Bible, even people who are so kind to fellow creatures and might be very sacrificial in what they do, God will know that.

[11 : 26] But in the end, if they have not seen who the Savior is and they have not served him, then it is true to say they are in darkness. Once you were darkness.

I hope you're not still there. Once you were darkness. But now he says you are light in the Lord. He doesn't say you are in light. He says you are light. Let's think about that.

The rescue that God has done. He has a similar sort of thing, as I said in Colossians. He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Light being brightness, glory, brilliance, splendor. That's where you are now.

And Paul refers to the actual wonderful creating power of what it is to become a Christian.

[12 : 34] When he says, the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

God said, let light shine out of darkness. When did God say that? Let light shine. Let there be light. In the beginning, when he made everything, his power to bring from nothing, pow, light, everything. And he said, let light shine out of darkness. And he's done the same thing in our hearts. Made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

And Paul's saying that the same power that went pow in the beginning to make everything has gone like that into each individual heart. Let there be light. Let there be light.

And the light of the gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shone into our hearts.

[13 : 41] So that's, still doesn't take us as far as the text does. That's saying we're brought into light. Light shone upon us. But the text says we are light.

And I'm reminded of Jesus saying, do you remember him saying, I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you'll never walk in darkness, but have the light of life.

So Jesus said, that's who I am. In this dark world, here is a place where light comes from. It's me. And then interestingly, Jesus said to his followers, you are the light of the world.

Let your light so shine, let your good deeds so shine that people will see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. And it's one of these things where, where we belong to Jesus Christ, somehow we pick up on what he is and we become something of that ourselves.

He is the light of the world. He wonderfully makes us the light of the world. You are the light of the world, says Jesus. What a miracle that is.

[14:52] That's what it is to become a Christian, to be made from darkness to light. You were darkness. Now you are light in the Lord.

It's a miracle. He also now turns it into something that has an obligation. And he says, therefore, walk as children of light.

And I don't know, I think we've got various responses to that therefore. We think, wow, yeah, that's something to be done. I hope we think that. And then we also think, what a mess I've made of this. How could the Lord, he must have made a mistake because there's so many dark things in my life and so many things that are not consistent with walking in the light. I think we probably have those reactions at others.

We say, Lord, forgive my sins. I often sin. I often fail. Forgive me my sins. Help me, Lord. Not if I, where I've stumbled to pick myself up again or you pick me up again.

[15:56] I still want to walk forward. I still want to walk in the light. Help me to walk in the light. Help me to walk as children of light. That was the first thing.

Here's the second thing. The fruit thing. So he says, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

So let's have a little bit about fruit. There's a Greek word for fruit. And I have to say, I looked it up. And it actually is not just, you know, is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable?

What's the answer to that? Is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable? Okay, there you go. That's definitely a fruit. I thought I'd bring an apple and I could definitely. In Greek, I don't think there's a distinction.

A karpos is a seed or a fruit or a vegetable or grapes or any, it's just whatever produce you get from something that grows.

[16:56] Okay, that's quite helpful. So when, oh well, let me not get ahead of myself. The whole idea of farming is to produce karpos, you know, something fruitful.

Oh, yes, so whether that was a tomato or an apple, I don't know, but it's still fruit. And that would be fruit.

So the seeds that you get from wheat is still fruit. And what you get on trees is fruit. Interesting, in Luke 14, it says, blessed is the fruit of your womb.

So you didn't, did you do, wombs produce fruit as well. This was referring, I think, to the baby Jesus, if I remember that rightly. Fruit.

Do you know in Isaiah chapter 5, God goes to his Old Testament people and he says, I planted a vineyard and I built a nice wall around it and I fertilized it and I pruned it and I looked after it.

[18:05] And I wanted fruit. Do you remember this bit in Isaiah 5? And he says, and what did I find? I was looking for good grapes, but I just found bad grapes.

And in a way, that's the whole history of that particular nation that God used in the Old Testament. That he gave them so many privileges and he was looking for fruit, but just found bad stuff most of the time.

Do you remember when John the Baptist came on the scene? Do you remember John the Baptist? I'm assuming some of these things you will know. And he said, he came preaching a baptism of repentance.

Yes? And he said, produce worthy of repentance. Do you remember what he said? He did actually. Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

It's interesting that John the Baptist, coming to the nation of Israel after all these many, many years, centuries, was saying to them, look, you've just got one last chance.

[19:13] The kingdom of heaven is drawing near. Now, let's do this all over again. Would you like to re-enter the land? Let's go through the River Jordan again. I'll baptize you. And now, produce fruits worthy of repentance.

Do you remember what he said? The axe is laid to the root of the tree. If there's no fruit, that'll be cut down. Where's the fruit? Do you remember Jesus going into Jerusalem?

Do you remember that he went to Jerusalem on those last crucial days? And as he goes into Jerusalem, there's a fig tree there. And Jesus makes a very almost theatrical point of looking for

fruit.

Is there any fruit? It's not the season for figs, wasn't it? A fig tree? It's not the season, but he still makes this point of looking. And he doesn't find any fruit. And what does he do with the fig tree? He curses it, doesn't he? And it's really a parable of what he's doing in going to Jerusalem. He's turning up. The king of kings is turning up to say, John the Baptist told you.

[20 : 19] The prophets of old told you. And now I'm here. Where's the fruit? Jesus told a story.

Oh, no, it wasn't a story. It was a parable. He says, I am the true vine. You are the branches. And if you stay stuck in the vine, if you abide in me, you will produce much fruit.

So Jesus, actually it's a big theme in the Bible. And Jesus says, the key to producing fruit is to stay close to me, to abide in me, to remain in me.

You will produce much fruit. And there's fruit in the parables that Jesus told. The seed that fell into the good soil produced.

Well, what do you think it produced? The seed, do you remember the sower going out to sow? Yes. And the seed that fell into the good soil, I think it produced 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold.

[21 : 25] But it's talking about fruit. I'm not sure whether he actually uses that word, but that's the idea of producing fruit. And in his other letter, one of his other letters, he talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

Now earlier, Steve was saying fruit of the light is a mixed metaphor. Actually, fruit of the Spirit is a mixed metaphor as well, but we're just used to that one. But in Galatians, he talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

Anybody know what the fruit of the Spirit is? He's suffering, patience, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith.

That's the old version. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. This is the fruit that the gospel produces.

It's not fruits, plural, it's fruit. So we need every one of those flavors. You know, we can't produce sort of 50% of it. We've got, it's one fruit with however many flavors there.

[22 : 34] That's what God is doing. He's planting the seed so as to produce fruit. That's the whole point of it. And in the text here, he just says the fruit of the light is goodness.

Goodness. Righteousness. Truth. Truth. Really, I think, being part of the truth of the gospel, the truth of who God is.

That's the fruit that God is looking for. And it is, the whole point of farming is to get fruit. And if you like, God is saying, all the way through the Old Testament, I was saying, where's the fruit?

And I just got bad grapes. And John the Baptist came and saying, where's the fruit? And he didn't find any. And Jesus gave them an extra chance when he went into Jerusalem. He didn't find any fruit. But you guys who have the gospel and the spirit and once were darkness, but now they're like, you produce fruit.

You produce fruit. Walk in the light and produce fruit. That's what he says. That's the whole point of farming. And he says, as you do so, verse 10, find out what pleases the Lord.

[24 : 02] Find out what pleases the Lord. It's actually, if I got this right, it's not so much a command as a, what happens. As you are finding out, as you walk, as you walk in the light, you are finding out what pleases God.

Worth pondering this, if we may, just for a moment. He says, has anybody got the word acceptable there? Find out. Verse 10, pleases the Lord.

Authorized version, I think, probably said what is acceptable. Acceptable. Acceptable doesn't quite give us the idea. It isn't, oh, well, that's acceptable. It's actually pleasing.

It's the thing that God says, oh, that's really good. That's nice. Like that. And it is possible to please God.

So it's worth pondering that. It's also possible to provoke God. So let me just take this quote that we sometimes use. It's not possible for me to do anything to make God love me less.

[25 : 12] It's not possible for me to do anything to make God love me more. Which is true as long as we understand that we can be loved and we can still provoke God.

So if you have children and you think of your children, you don't stop loving them when they write in crayon on the wall that you've newly decorated.

You don't stop loving them, but you are annoyed with them. Particularly if you told them not to do that. I told you not to do that. And you have done that. And I am cross with you for that.

It doesn't mean I don't love you. It doesn't mean I care. In the book of Revelation, the risen Jesus comes to a church and says, I love you, but I rebuke you.

I discipline you. You need to repent. And so we can provoke God. But we can also, according to this text, please God.

[26 : 23] And we might think, no, that can't be right. How can we please God? The Bible actually says on a number of occasions that we can please him. May he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ.

We might think, well, I'm sinful. Well, everything I do is a bit of a mess, really. But that's not quite true to the gospel.

I mean, everything that we do, we're always sinners. There's always sin. But we can do, according to this, it is possible for Christians to do things where God says, I know that that's not perfect.

I know you got distracted halfway through that. But I'm pleased with what you've done. And I think the example would be this childish drawing of mummy and daddy. Okay. So I've done a childlike drawing of mummy and daddy.

And if you, as a loving parent, were brought this picture by a little person, let's assume that they're under the age of 18 when they've done this. And they say, here you are mummy, that's you and daddy for your birthday or something like that.

[27 : 31] You wouldn't say, well, take that out of my sight. God, I'm going to miss me. What do you think of those ears and hair? You wouldn't do that, would you?

You would say, sweetheart, thank you so much for that. Because you would see the context. You would see the motive. You would see that the child had tried. Did you see what the child was trying to do?

And all that sort of thing. And I'd like to invite us to see what the Bible says. That as loved children, we can do things for God which are pleasing to him.

That he will say, well, that's not perfect, is it? But I'm pleased with that. And if we want to know what sort of things please the Lord, I think we just go through the whole list of what we've been looking at the past few weeks.

And everything that he says he wants us to do is something that pleases the Lord. So if we can be pleased as parents with the faulty efforts of our children, how much more can God be pleased with our genuine hearted attempts to please him?

[28 : 45] And he goes on to say, finding out what pleases the Lord. Now, finding out, this word really means to test out or to test with the idea of approving something.

So if they'd had MOT testing stations in those days, you would take your car along to be tested and approved. And you'd expect to get a tick over it.

And he says, that's what I want you to do with God's will, with your life. You do the things.

You walk in the light. You do the things that God is pleased with. And as you do this, you find out that God is pleased.

You test and approve what pleases God. And maybe it's just a bit of trial and error there. Oh, I tried that. Well, that didn't come out right. That doesn't please God.

[29 : 50] But this, this does please God. And I'm testing that out in my life. And I'm approving it and saying, yeah, that's right. So as an example, do you remember somebody helped me with this?

It's better to be a benefactor than a burglar. Do you remember that he says, the one who stole, let him no more steal, but work with their hands to give something to people who have need.

And I think that there's an example that you could test and approve that. Well, once I used to be a bit like-fingered, but because I'm now a Christian, I've learnt that I could work.

And I've learnt that I can give money to people who are in need. And I didn't fancy the idea very much. But now I've got it under my belt. I actually have tested that out.

And it is a better way to live than before. And I can test and approve what pleases God. And that's what he's saying they should do.

[30 : 54] It's a thing to put on our agenda, isn't it? Lord, this week, help me to learn what pleases you. And help me to put that to the test. And to find out, yeah, that's good.

Test and approve what pleases God. You could say the Christian life as learning to be pleased with what pleases God. It's a lifelong thing. But that's what he's talking about.

Okay, third point. Verse 11. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

Interesting to notice the fruit thing there. He isn't saying that darkness doesn't produce anything. It does produce stuff. But he doesn't dignify it with the word fruit.

Darkness produces stuff, but it's fruitless. And in Galatians, he says the fruit of the spirit versus the works of the flesh.

[31 : 53] Do you notice that? So the flesh does produce stuff, but he doesn't dignify it with the word fruit. He says it's just works. The spiritual life produces fruit.

So let's have a little think what he's saying here. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. Everything exposed by the light becomes visible. For it is light that makes everything visible. That is why it is said, wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

So let's have a little think about this exposing and awakening thing. So how does the light relate to the world of darkness? And I think there are three possibilities.

The first possibility is that the darkness overcomes the Christian. So we get into a position where Christians are no different from the world around them.

[32 : 58] So where Paul says, once you are darkness, now you are light. He'd have to say, once you are darkness, but I'm afraid your light has gone out. And it doesn't seem to be shining very much. So in terms of Ephesians, this is what we don't want to happen.

That Christian couples who have the option to make a commitment to one another in a married way, they don't bother to do that.

They say, well, they just live the way that the promiscuous world lives. Christian business people say, well, God doesn't mind.

I'm a son of God. I can cheat on my accounting. And Christians say, well, I know we're supposed to love Jesus above everything, but there's lots of things in this world we should love, and it's more or less equal.

And Christians have lost the light if they're that way. And I don't think A is the option that we want. Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, says Paul.

[34 : 09] Option B is to live in a Christian bubble. So this would be a Christian young person, gone to a Christian school, goes to a Christian university, and then suddenly emerges into a world where there are non-Christians.

Living in a Christian bubble. So a Christian bubble person would say, well, all my friends are Christians, all my social activities are Christians, forgetting that Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners.

So Jesus didn't do the Christian bubble option. Certainly didn't do the being conformed to this world, but he didn't do the Christian bubble option. And the third option is the one that the text tells us.

It says, have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. So literally saying, don't be co-partners with them.

So the things that they do, don't do the things that they do. He's not saying, don't be in the same office. He's not saying, don't go to the same university. He's not saying, don't sit in the same classroom.

[35 : 24] But he is saying, don't do the evil things that they do. Do you see? But he is assuming that you're around them and they're around you because he says, expose the deeds of darkness.

And when he says expose, he's got this idea of the searchlight, the light shining and showing up the darkness by the mere fact that the light shines.

And he uses this word expose twice, doesn't he? Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. Verse 13, everything is exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.

And he's saying, this is what I want you to do. I want you to have that holiness of life, that purity of light, and I want you to be shining like that right next to the people in darkness who need the light of Jesus Christ.

So don't go away so that your light never touches them. Don't be partners with them, but do be so in some sort of their neighborhood, if you like, that your light can shine into their lives.

[36 : 47] So I remember the gentleman who was previously treasurer of the church here. He was doing a PhD in theoretical physics at Sussex University.

It was Trevor I'm thinking of. And in his research group was another gentleman, and I'm thinking of Rob Head now, some of you will remember him, who became a Christian.

And Rob Head said, how did you become a Christian, Rob? And the answer was, I saw Trevor in his work, the way he spoke, the sort of person he was, and his life made me feel so uncomfortable that I knew I had to become a Christian.

And there is, says Paul, a power in a holy life lived right at the next bench, if you like, or the next desk to someone who is not yet a Christian.

There is a power to shine which makes this other person think, you know, there is a God, and I'm not right with him. Because I can't live the way this person does.

[38 : 09] They have something I don't have, and I need that. And find out that that is Jesus. The convicting power of a holy life.

It's not preaching at people, but it's a holy life that has power to convey challenge and expose sins. And I think that's exactly what Paul is saying here.

Everything exposed by the light becomes visible because light makes everything visible. It does that. It points these things up. Maybe that's how you became a Christian.

Maybe it wasn't so much the preaching, although you had to understand something, but maybe it was just the sort of people that you found Christian people to be, and you thought, my mouth is so foul compared to these people.

My life is so out of control compared to these people. Maybe you are the person who shed the light into somebody's life.

[39 : 16] Maybe you are thinking, I don't know whether it's worth even trying to convince, convert my friends. Well, I would say just keep going because Paul says, if you're walking in the light, the light shines and it has this power to bring, to make things visible.

And I go a little bit further than that because Paul goes on to quote, this is why it is said, wake up, oh sleeper, rise from the dead, Christ will shine on you, Christ will give you light.

And as we've seen, it's a product of at least these two prophecies. And the prophecies look forward to the dead. Sorry, I've actually written them down.

The first one says, the dead will live, wake up and rejoice, your dew will be like the dew of the morning. So I think he's thinking of the sort of city of Jerusalem, dead, dry, dusty, corpses, burials. And he's saying, no, I should look it up rather than waffling without. It says, your dead will live, this is Isaiah 26, 19, their bodies will rise, you who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy, your dew is like the dew of the morning, the earth will give birth to her dead.

[40 : 41] so that this army of people will rise up. And Isaiah 60 says, arise, arise, shine for your light has come, the glory of the Lord rises upon you, darkness covers the earth, thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you, his glory appears over you, nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

So there's the city that's rebuilt, and there are the people that have come alive, and there is the glory shining on it. That's the Old Testament idea that he's picking up on.

Let's bring that into the New Testament. It's not applied to a city, a geographical city, it's applied to believers. You were darkness, now you are light in the Lord.

And the Lord is Christ. Interesting proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Paul could say, the things that the Lord does, Christ does.

Christ will give you light. And he makes it in terms of people. Once you were dead, and now you are alive.

[42 : 03] Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, the glory of the Lord will shine on you. And I think it is two things with which we close. It is number one, a wake up call to sleepy believers.

So Paul is saying, if believer, you've gone to sleep, you've forgotten what it is to love Jesus Christ, you've forgotten what it is to give everything to the Lord Jesus Christ, you've forgotten what it is to pray to him, to be thankful to him, to rejoice in him, to give your life to him again and again.

Wake up, he says. Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. To the sleepy believer, he says, get up! Time to wake up!

And I think he also says it to those who are not yet believers. So maybe you're saying this morning, okay, you've been coming along to church for quite a long time now, you've heard lots of things, but you've never quite thought, well, this is for me.

You've always sort of had one foot on the fence. That's not right, is it? One foot on either side, you're sitting on the fence, do you know what I mean? And you've never quite given your all to this. [43 : 27] You've sort of been at arm's length, well, I sort of like to be a Christian now and again and he's saying, that won't do. You need to cross the boundary from death to life.

You need to nail your colours to the mast. You need, do you know nail your colours to the mast? You need to say, I'm a Christian. I am a Christian, I'm going to be a Christian. Whatever you lot think, however inconvenient it is, whatever changes we have to make, I will be a Christian. and he says, wake up, rise from the dead, now's the time to do it and Christ will shine on you. Let's sing together.