

Lent III

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[0 : 00] In our Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy chapter 6, we heard how the Israelites were to be people who walked with God.

! We heard from Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 through 6 the following words. ! Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

The Israelites were not simply people of the book. They were to be a people whose thoughts, hearts, and actions were formed by learning and then by doing God's commandments.

They were to have an active faith. They were called to be practitioners and following the Lord by being people who walked in the way of wisdom.

[1 : 14] Friends, wisdom is not mere knowledge or knowing facts about God. It is the combination of learning and then practicing. Learning and then doing.

There are people who can wax quite eloquently on certain theological matters, but they are fools. Because that knowledge is just intellectual satisfaction.

There is a famous Lutheran, well, he wasn't really Lutheran, but German theologian that spent many years writing volumes upon volumes of theology, only to find out that he had a mistress for many, many, many years that his wife never knew about.

We are called to take what we learn and practice the faith, and that is wisdom. We are called to walk in the way of holiness, which is exactly what Deuteronomy chapter 6 is about.

Now, in Ephesians chapter 5, we heard St. Paul begin this chapter with the following words.

Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us.

[2 : 42] St. Paul, being an Israelite, entrenched in the Jewish law, says the very same thing that we heard in Deuteronomy chapter 6. He says that we are to be imitators of God by living a life of love.

And what is the core of such love? It's a life of sacrifice, which is what love does. It sacrifices. And the pinnacle of such love is seen in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 5 teach us that our life is to be one of walking in the ways of God, which is wisdom. This wisdom comes as we imitate God's ways rather than imitating the chaos of our culture.

St. Paul says that we are now light. That's what he says here in Ephesians chapter 5. And this light connects to what we received in holy baptism. That's why in the baptismal liturgy, we light a candle and we give it then to the one baptized or to the sponsors or parents.

This visibly speaks of how one is brought out of darkness and into the light. And that is why St. Paul says here in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 8 through 13, the following.

[4 : 03] Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light. So what is this darkness that St. Paul spells out here in Ephesians chapter 5?

Well, he says it's fornication. Using our bodies as an act of selfish lust, which is the opposite of sacrificial love.

It's covetousness. Desiring what others have. And making that our sole priority, our aim in life. Is to keep up with the Joneses.

[5 : 03] It's idolatry. Putting image, possessions, people, careers, or even family before God. It is also using our mouths to tear people down.

Or looking down upon others. Sometimes religious snobbery. Rather than offering ourselves as a thanks, offering thanksgiving to God and giving thanks for others.

It's being formed by the social influences and images which we fixate upon. Rather than being content in Christ. Who he has made us to be.

And seeking to cast the light of Christ upon the world. Rather than making ourselves the center of attention. It's allowing ourselves to be controlled by our passions.

Rather than being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Who desires to conform us to the word of God. So that we become more and more like Christ. And less and less like the chaos.

[6 : 07] And the wickedness of our age. St. Paul calls us to return to the light. To return to our baptism.

By walking in wisdom. By seeking after wisdom. The way we do this is first of all we are to confess our sins to God.

And God desires to have mercy upon us. He does not desire our condemnation. Hear that again. God does not desire to condemn.

He desires to shed his grace and his mercy upon you. Second, we need to stand up for what is right. Even if this causes backlash from the world.

And it will. As I've said before. We can't just go along to get along. We can't condone sin in our own lives.

[7 : 05] Nor can we turn a blind eye to the wickedness. That allows darkness to overcome us. To brainwash us. And make us think in ways that are not Christian.

St. Paul says we are to walk in the light. He says here in verse 11 of Ephesians chapter 5.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Rather expose them. Friendship with the ways of darkness leads to our own destruction.

Such darkness also breaks down families. Perishes, communities, and cultures. The way that darkness is exposed, however, is not by conforming to it.

It's also not shouting it down. The light overcomes darkness as we are being more and more conformed to the light of Christ.

[8 : 13] Living in humility and obedience to God. It is living within a rule. A rhythm of life. Where imitating Christ is at the center of everything we do.

Not just on Sundays. Everything we do. That is godly wisdom. As I mentioned before, knowledge without wisdom is the blueprint for a life of folly.

As we read in morning prayer this last Friday. From 1 Corinthians chapter 8. Knowledge puffs up. But love edifies. We should seek to grow.

Which means deepening our understanding of the faith. In order to imitate and practice the love of God found in Christ Jesus. By practicing a life of sacrifice.

That's godly wisdom. If our knowledge is simply for everyone to know how smart we are. Then pride will lead to our demise.

[9 : 24] Love is the goal. Love is the goal. As we seek to live humbly and obediently in our baptismal grace. Growing in that grace.

Beloved, our calling as long as we have breath here on earth. Is to imitate Christ. By turning away from the chaos of our culture.

And to walk in the order of our savior, Jesus Christ. That is the wisdom that we are called to pursue at all costs.

And to practice. Amen. In the name of the father and of the son of the holy ghost. Amen. Amen.