

Nokesville UMC Sunday Worship (Fourth Sunday of Lent)

March 22, 2020

Rev. YoungMin Kim

Live as Children of Light

Ephesians 5:8-14

(1)

Good morning! How are you doing in your life? Are you safe and healthy? I was just updated from our community Facebook page that Dr. Bill posted yesterday. We have a confirmed case in our community. Once we have a confirmed case, possibly, we might have more. What we can do at this moment is to pray for those who suffer from the coronavirus and to follow CDC guidelines. Please don't minimize the seriousness of the spread of the virus. Until we meet in church and worship God sitting together, please be safe and healthy.

(2)

According to the Lectionary schedule, we read Ephesians 5:8-14. The Ephesians (or the Letter to Ephesus) was written by the Apostle Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome. In addition to Ephesians, Paul wrote three other letters in prison—Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—so we call these four letters “The Prison Letters (or Epistles).” In most cases, Paul responded to particular errors or heresies that the churches in the cities confronted. However, Paul did not address any particular error or heresy in the church of Ephesus, so we might understand that Paul generally addressed God's eternal love, grace, and purpose for the church and the people in this letter.

Here, we need to narrow down and focus on the current situation of the church in Ephesus. Since the Apostle Paul first spread the good news and sowed the seeds of the gospel, the number of believers in the city tremendously increased. And a remarkable number of the new believers were both Jews and Gentiles who converted to Christianity. It was good for the church to have more new converts, but some issues inevitably were raised. Because Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians came from different religious and cultural backgrounds, even though they came to have a bond as brothers and sisters by the blood of Christ, there were some conflicts between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the communal Christian life of the church.

For the church in Ephesus, the Apostle Paul, the founder of the church, exhorted the Ephesians to “live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true” (vv. 8b-9). Paul also encouraged them to “try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord” (v. 10) and to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (v. 11).

(3)

During the week, I have watched the daily briefing of the Coronavirus Task Force and checked the increased number of the confirmed cases, deaths, and recovery in the States, Korea, and Europe. Unfortunately, the number of confirmed cases and deaths is in a steep rise. As of Saturday, March 21st, there were 22,098 confirmed cases, and 278 people died in the nation. It is a huge increase compared to the number last week. In this situation, however, a lot of young college students flew to Miami to enjoy their life at the beach. Some people still believe that Coronavirus is another flu, so they don't care much about it. Numerous people still do not realize the importance of social distancing and washing hands to prevent spread of the virus. And there are still endless lines for panic buying and trying to hoard food, toilet paper, water, sanitizer, and more.

What does it mean to live as children of light? What is pleasing to God against the unfruitful works of darkness in the spread of fear, anxiety, anger, and a virus?

Children of light do not let fear, anger, anxiety, stress, or other things overwhelm you. In spite of a seemingly despairing situation, we must have hope that we can overcome through the power given by the Holy Spirit. In spite of this situation of anguish, we try to find how to create love and care for others through the power of the Holy Spirit. You may know that our church has promoted a "Drive-Thru Food Pantry" to sustain our food ministry for those who need food. We decided not to close our food pantry, not allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by fear and anxiety. This is what we decided: to keep creating love and care and practicing these things for our community. What can you do as children of light? And what can you do to please God in your life? Please keep creating hope, love, and care in your life, and let the Holy Spirit keep working within you and through you. Let us be the church! Let us be Christians in this period of anxiety and fear. Amen.