

# **Sermon: What the Lord Wants!**

**Text: Ephesians 5:8-21 ESV**

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**May 17, 2020**

**Introduction:** Chocolate, Vanilla or Strawberry. ABC, NBC, CBS. Ford, Chrysler or General Motors. Our choices used to be so simple. But we are no longer living in a “Leave it to Beaver” or “Father Knows Best Society”! We are living in a world where we must guard our children’s hearts as well as ours against the garbage that is out there.

**Baskin Robbins, Bressler’s, Ben and Jerry’s, Hersheys. I have always liked Breyers. There are said to be over 1000 different flavours of ice cream in existence, including vanilla, strawberry and even avocado! Then there is Bruster’s Ice Cream near Beaver, PA (tell story about Mel and Eleanor Hogsett.**

**There are twenty-eight thousand TV channels worldwide. In 2017, there were 1,761 commercial television stations on the air in the United States, slightly fewer than in previous years but still over a thousand more than in 2000.**

**As of 2019, there are more than 31 million YouTube channels out there. The number of channels is growing strong: last year it grew more than 25%. People all around the world are creating a YouTube channel, and uploading 500 hours of video every minute. Do you think we might need to be both wise and selective about what we consume?**

**There are approximately 75 vehicle manufacturers from across North America, Europe, and other countries and in excess of 1,700 different car models for these manufacturers, and that is not even allowing for color selections.**

**You need a light bulb? A Manhattan store called “Just Bulbs” can help! Since 1980, Just Bulbs has been THE light bulb store. They stock 35,000 Different Types of Light Bulbs. Every kind of bulb for every day and every occasion. Incandescent, Halogen, Fluorescent, Mercury, Sodium and Metal Halide Bulbs and more.**

**We live in a multiple-option society.**

**What more could you possibly want?**

**Our culture is fragmenting so fast that new ethnic groups are being created faster than they can be cataloged (24,000, at last count), and 7000 language groups.**

**According to some there are 63 genders. According to God, there are two, male and female. Our world has gone mad. Our entire globe needs to go back to a simpler more straight-forward time and believe God and take Jesus as their Savior.**

**We need to know “What the Lord wants” of each of us. As individuals we need to make the choice between Light and Dark, Good and Evil, God and Satan, the narrow and wide way, truth and falsehood.**

**With the title of my sermon comes the question: WHAT DOES THE LORD WANT OF ME? Let’s go back to God’s Word this morning for some insight and truth!**

**Paul intended Ephesians to be a circular letter whose initial audience was probably Ephesus, then other established churches in Asia, and then us today. Paul most certainly was talking to Christians then and now when he said:**

**Ephesians 5:8-11 ESV** 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

**What does the Lord want of me? The text easily shows us three activities the Lord wants from us. We are to:**

- 1. Behave like children of Light vv. 8-9**
- 2. Discern what the Lord wants v. 10**
- 3. Expose darkness by contrast v. 11**

## **I. Behave Like Children of Light.**

### **A. Paul says children, not adults or babies**

**Jesus held children in high regard: Matthew 18:3 ESV** 3 and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Children are loving, trusting, modest, unspoiled by the world.**

**But there is another side to children - They are immature, naive, easily taken advantage of and vulnerable.**

**Ephesians 4:14 ESV** <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

**As children we need to select our role models very carefully.**

**Christians are to be children of Light. We became children of light by our association with Christ. We continue to be known as children of Light by our faith which is expressed by our fruit. This is evidence to the world of our relationship with the Father and His Son.**

**We need to be responsible as God's children.**

- 1. For the family name (Christians)**
- 2. for the image we portray**

**Christians are very visible. The world is watching how we treat each other, and them. They are looking for consistency with what we say we believe and how we behave. In **verses 8-11** of our text, it says children of Light are seen possessing:**

- 1. goodness**
- 2. right living**
- 3. truth**

***Goodness* is a part of the listing of the fruit of the Spirit found in **Galatians 5**: It is a Godly quality and not to be confused with "He's a good person" in a worldly sense.**

***Right-living* is much the same principle. No one can claim to be righteous outside of his or her relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior.**

**God calls us as Christians to be holy and represent His Son consistently. We need to be asking constantly: "what would Jesus do?" How will this affect my witness?**

**And finally here, truth is to be found in the way we behave. **III John v. 4 ESV** I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.**

**Truth is a constant. It does not change with culture. Truth is actually meant to *change* culture. Truth is consistent and dependable. Truth is our God.**

**Illus.** The triad thesis, antithesis, synthesis is a progression of three ideas or propositions in which the first idea is followed by a second idea that negates the first, and the conflict between the first and second ideas is resolved by a third idea.[2] It is often used to explain the dialectical method of German philosopher **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel**,[3] but Hegel never used the terms himself; instead his triad was concrete, abstract, absolute. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis originated with Johann Fichte.[1]

Complete goodness, right living and truth are qualities that we possess or can possess as we become children of Light. Light will reveal itself in action. Life in the Light is not rigid or legalistic. We have freedom in Christ – but with freedom comes responsibility. Oh, there’s the rub.

So we are asked to be like children of Light.

And secondly

## **II. We Need to Discern What the Lord Wants of Us.**

(v. 10) **ESV** reads: 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. The **KJV** says: “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord”.

There are two interesting Greek words in the text here. One is δοκιμαζω which means literally to see whether a thing is genuine or not by testing and examining it, i.e., not a cheap imitation, not synthetic. The other Greek word, ευαρεστος means simply well-pleasing and carries more of the meaning of the **ESV** translation in this case. But God makes no false claims, He is faithful as His Word is faithful, and in **Romans 12:1-2 ESV** He tells us how we can know what is expected.

**Romans 12:1-2 ESV** 1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers,[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.[b] 2 Do not be conformed to this world,[c] but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.[d]

### **Footnotes**

[a] **Romans 12:1** Or brothers and sisters

[b] **Romans 12:1** Or your rational service

[c] **Romans 12:2** Greek age

[d] **Romans 12:2** Or what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God

**Both Greek words (ideas) are found in both passages. “Acceptable” and “tested.”**

**You say, “Well, why do I need to know what the Lord wants of me?”**

**Because we owe God everything. He has given us new life as His children in Jesus Christ; we owe it to ourselves and those in Darkness to share the possibility of eternal life.**

**How can we know God’s will? We know it through:**

- 1. Prayer**
- 2. Worship**
- 3. Study of God’s Word working with the Holy Spirit**

**The Holy Spirit works in all these areas to teach us. It is essential that we know the WORD.**

**Why? Because we are losing ground on the world pop. (7.8 billion). Births are more than double what deaths are worldwide.**

**Churches of Christ and Christian Churches (Independent) might be 1.5 million**

**Mormons, who are a cult, number 16 million; and 95% of their converts are professing Christians (Why, because they do not know and understand the Word of God and become easy targets).**

**Read v. 11a** <sup>11</sup> **Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness,**

**“Take no part in” is talking about a continual fellowship or exposure. This is not to say that we are not to associate with non-Christians at all. It is saying that continual fellowship is both dangerous and wrong. We must be in the world to affect it, but care needs to be taken.**

**Light that is not taken into a dark room leaves the room dark! BUT, if you put enough light into a room – darkness is destroyed and replaced by light.**

**The Christian is not only to have light, but by his very nature and God’s instruction- he is to spread light. We must participate in the world to be seen by the world. The saving function of the Church, as we are the Body of Christ and His children, cannot just take place within these man-made walls.**

**We are meant to be Living Scripture!**

To summarize we are asked to behave like children of the Light, and we are asked to discern what God wants of us, but finally and most importantly we are asked to:

### **III. Expose Darkness by Contrast (JB).**

**John 3:20-21 ESV** 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

There’s that word “expose” again!

This same Greek word (translated “expose”) is used in **II Timothy 3:16-17 ESV** 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Footnotes: [a] 2 Timothy 3:17 That is, a messenger of God (the phrase echoes a common Old Testament expression)

Again the word (expose) is translated reproof here in the ESV and also in the KJV, “rebuking” in the NIV, “correcting error” in JB Phillips, and “refuting error” in the NEB. So the same word that describes what God’s Word does also describes the character of the real children of Light. That is why I say that we are Living Scripture. What an awesome responsibility that is.

The idea behind the Greek word used here is to show someone his sin and to call him to repentance. The word does not mean only to blame or to reprove nor to convince in the sense of proof nor to reveal or just expose, pointing out another’s problems, but to help set right – to point the person away from sin and towards repentance and a relationship with God.

So we are to expose darkness how?

**By contrast!** Light and darkness side by side.

**Illus.** When I worked for the food industry, the USDA inspector exposed problems, uncovered areas of plant and equipment issues with his flashlight - not with the intention of shutting us down, but to help bring us into compliance.

We would try to hide things but his light would always expose our deficiencies.

**By contrast!** I guess too many times we try to blend in with the world. Many times there isn't any contrast – no apparent difference at all - as if we were chameleons or wearing spiritual camouflage.

When someone says there is no God, we need to be ready and able to show them by our conduct there is. Here is how the Apostle Paul finishes this section with a correction for the church: **Ephesians 5:12-21 ESV** <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**II Timothy 4:1-5 ESV** <sup>1</sup> I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound (healthy) teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Jesus continues speaking to the church **Revelation 3:19-22 ESV** <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. <sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Church, let's get busy doing what we have been designed and called to accomplish while we are in this world. Let's demonstrate we are God's faithful and true children.