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12th Sunday a. Trinity
August 30, 2009
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: Ephesians 5:15-20 *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Theme: THE CAREFUL CHRISTIAN WALK

- Careful because of the times
- Careful because of those around him
- Careful because he understands

Dear fellow faith walkers, fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

Have you ever noticed how much you can tell about a person by the way he or she walks? If someone walks with a limp, you might guess that they have a bad hip, knee, ankle, or back. If someone walks with their shoulders slumped and their head down, you can tell that they are either timid or sad about something. Someone who walks around with their head up and their shoulders back is a confident person who is comfortable in their own skin.

In our text the Apostle Paul writes about how we walk. In verse 15 he writes of walking circumspectly or carefully. In this 5th chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he writes three different times about our walk. In verse 2 he wrote, "*And walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us.*" In verse 8 he wrote, "*You were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*" And then again here in verse 15 of our text. It quickly becomes apparent to the reader that Paul is not talking of how a person physically puts one foot in front of the other.

When Paul writes of walking circumspectly or carefully, he is speaking of our way or conduct of life. Just as you can tell a lot about a person by the way he or she walks, you should be able to tell a lot about a person by the way he or she lives their life. While faith is a matter of the heart, what is in one's heart is mostly clearly seen in how they live. Let us therefore consider this morning the "Careful Christian Walk." The Christian will be careful in his walk of life first of all because of the times in which he lives. He is careful because of those around him. And finally he is careful because he understands. May God fill us by His Spirit working through His Word that our Christian walk may be a careful one, bringing glory to our Father's name every step of the way!

CAREFUL BECAUSE OF THE TIMES

There is no better example that I can think of someone who must walk carefully than that of a tight-rope walker. Maybe you've seen that high-wire act at a circus or on television. The

tight-rope walker must be very careful with each step he takes. The wire he walks on is several stories off of the ground. If he were to make one careless step he could fall off the high-wire and plummet to his death on the ground below. The tight-rope walker measures each step carefully and takes no careless steps because he knows it could mean the difference between life and death.

As the redeemed children of God should not our walk, our conduct in this life, be just as careful as a tight-rope walker? It is true there is not a thin wire perched precariously high above the ground that we walk across as Christians. But just as the tight-rope walker must walk carefully because one false step lead him into danger or death, we too must know of the danger and death that surrounds us. Paul writes, ***“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*** The Christian’s walk is a careful walk because of the times in which he lives.

We don’t have to look far and wide to see if the days are evil - we know they are. We need only turn on the television to see just how evil the days are. We are bombarded with sexual images and vulgar language. In school our children are taught that there is no Creator of the heavens and the earth, but instead the world and everything in it came about by chance happenings. Humanists deny and ignore sin and counsels guilty consciences to accept their sinful way of life as who they are and do whatever makes them feel good. The days are evil, let there be no doubt about it!

Because the days are evil, we must walk carefully through this world. The devil with his followers would like nothing more than to drag us away from Christ onto the path of death and destruction with him. Jesus Himself has warned us, ***“Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.”*** (Mt 7:13) The way to hell is broad and easy. There are many walking that way. We are enticed by the masses to join them on their foolish walk to hell. “Well everyone else is doing it, why not me?!”

We need to be careful lest we be allured to follow the world on that broad path which leads to destruction. We need to be careful for the sake of our own souls. ***“Watch and pray!”*** Jesus exhorts us. ***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith,”*** Peter writes. (1Pt 5:8) Walk carefully, dear Christians, for the times in which we live are evil!

CAREFUL BECAUSE OF THOSE AROUND HIM

In Seminary, men training to become ministers of the Gospel are given specific warning to be careful about their conduct and way of life. If a pastor is a gossip, it might give the impression to his members that it is okay to bear false witness against his neighbor. If a pastor is seen leaving the bars every night at 2 am, it might give the impression to those around him that drunkenness is okay. If a pastor is seen frequenting casinos, the impression might be given that gambling is okay and not sinful. Furthermore those unbelievers who are outside the church and know this is a pastor, might think that there is no difference between a heathen and a believer and so the word of God is blasphemed because of this careless pastor’s conduct. It should be obvious to all and expected that the Christian pastor will be very careful about the choices he makes and his conduct.

We said earlier that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he or she walks. You can also tell a lot about a person by they language they use, by the people and places they chose to spend their time with, and even by the way they dress. There should be a great difference

between how a child of light walks, that is a believer, and how the child of darkness, the unbeliever, walks. Sadly it seems at times that it hard to tell the difference. We spend so much of our life trying to fit in and avoid being seen as different. Wanting to fit in determines what we wear, how we talk, and how we spend our time. This means then, that we want to fit in with world headed toward hell.

If we talk and behave just like an unbeliever, what are we telling those around us? We are saying that the only difference between a believer and a non-believer is what he does on Sunday morning. (And even in that respect there might be no difference!) Furthermore what are we telling our fellow believer? Like a minister with loose morals, any Christian by their conduct might the impression that such behavior is acceptable. By behaving as the world behaves we might lead them into sin and unbelief.

But we are different! We are the redeemed of God! We once were in darkness, now we are in the light of the Lord! We have been rescued from the eternal darkness of hell and by grace made members of the kingdom of God! The Christian walks carefully not only for his own spiritual good, but also for the spiritual good of those around him. ***“Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil.”*** If we are walking carefully, that is we are like a tight-rope walker, taking each step of our lives with due diligence, we will be alert and aware. We will redeem or make the most of our time. We will be alert to opportunities to share the good news with unbelievers when they present themselves. If we are walking as fools we will miss those opportunities or our conduct may be detrimental to our message.

We also walk carefully for the good of our fellow believer. The last thing we want to do is to lead them astray and into sin. Jesus says, ***“Offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”*** (Mt 18:7) Rather than leading them into sin, as we walk carefully we want to build each other up in the faith. This is what Paul is speaking of in our text when he writes, ***“Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”*** We want to encourage and build up our fellow Christian in the faith. We sing songs based on the Word of God to cheer ourselves up and cheer each other up. What more encouraging word could you give your fellow believer than a verse from the psalms?

Let us sing and melody in our hearts to the Lord on our careful Christian walk!

CAREFUL BECAUSE HE UNDERSTANDS

Finally, the Christian is careful in his walk because he understands. The Christian is not lost, wandering aimlessly through this life, uncertain of what is his eternal future is. His walk is not a pointless one. The Christian walks with understanding. By faith he understands that the world in which he lives was formed by the Word of God. By faith the Christian understands that his own sin had separated him from his creator. By faith the Christian understands that there was nothing he could do to save himself from the eternal punishment that his sin deserve.

But by faith the Christian also understands the love of God. Love that was so great that He sent His one and only Son to save him. By faith the Christian understands that Jesus died on the cross was to take away all of his sins. By faith the Christian understands that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead means that God accepted His payment for all those sins. By faith the Christian understands that he has been saved by grace and grace alone. By faith the Christian understands that even his faith was the work of God. By faith the Christian understands that because of what God has done for him, that heaven is his home.

Therefore the Christian walks carefully because he understands. He understands what it cost for him to be saved and he does not want to throw that away. He understands the grace of God which was at work from eternity to save him. The Christian wants to understand more and more of all that God did to save him, so he continually turns to the Word. ***“Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*** (v17)

The Christian is careful in his walk also because he understands that all he has in this life, yes his very life itself, is a gift God has entrusted to him. By faith he understands that ***“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.”*** (James 1:17) Because he understands, he is ***“giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (v20) Notice Paul speaks of giving thanks ALWAYS for ALL things! No matter what the situation we find ourselves in, even those that seem the darkest at the moment, we give thanks to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks always for all things because by the grace of God we understand that ***all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*** (Rom 8:28)

So you can see there is much more at stake here than falling off a tightrope and breaking a limb. Ours is not to be the walk of fools or the staggering of a drunkard. But our Christian walk is to be a careful, deliberate walk. We do well to measure each step we take, each decision we make carefully. A walk that is directed not by what this evil world views as good, but what God in His word reveals as good. A walk that is careful because of those around us watching each step we take. And a walk that is careful because we understand the cost of our salvation. A walk that is filled with giving thanks to our God who saved us! May God direct our footsteps according to His will. Amen.