

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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The Walk, Talk and Strategy of the NT Church

by Dan Trygg

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16

“Keep your habitual-conduct among the Gentiles admirable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

I Peter 2:12

“And they were continually persisting in the apostolic doctrine, the sharing, the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. ...And all the ones believing were upon the same thing, and were having all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ...[they were] praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was daily adding the ones being saved upon the same thing.” Acts 2:42,44,45,47

The eternal Word of God is introduced by the apostle John as the agent of creation, co-existent *with* God, yet somehow *being* God. John said that in Him was “life” from God. This is not the word strictly used for physical life (*bios*), but a life (*zōē*) that is also ethical, intelligent and spiritual. Indeed, it does make alive and animate living creatures, but it seems to be more than that. It comes from God, and can have a supernatural quality. John says that **this life is the light of humankind** (Jn. 1:4). It shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot comprehend it, or stop it (vs. 5). **This “true Light” of the Creator God came into the world and “enlightens every person”** (Jn. 1:9). When He came, His own people did not recognize Him, or take Him to themselves (vs. 11). To those who did, ...those who *took* Him and *trusted in* Him..., to them He gave legal authority to become children of God. This not the result of human generation, or sexual union, or human will, rather “out from God they were begotten” (vss. 12,13). In verse 14, the concept of “Light” and the eternal “Word” are merged, once again. **The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us for a time, and we beheld His radiance**, the shining forth of God’s grace and truth through a human life. This is an important realization – **The “light of God” is the radiance, outshining, or revelation of His life made visible to others in the unusual acts, attitudes and expressions of a person.** The eternal Word, “Light”, or “revelation” of God is Life, and this Life became evident through the man, Jesus. He was filled with the Life of God, and it was made visible by His attitudes, words and actions, as He interacted with others.

In Jesus’ manifesto of the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), **the Lord describes what His followers are to be like.** He declared, “**You are the light of the world.** A city on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp, and then hides it under a bucket. He places it on the lampstand, so it will give light to everyone in the house.” **How are we the light of the world?** Jesus explains, “Let your light shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Again, **the “light” is seen as the outshining of an inner character change or inner life, as it is expressed in practical actions.**

Jesus came back to this concept in 8:12. It was the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), a time to remember the wilderness wandering. They commemorated God’s provision of water in the wilderness, each day filling a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam, and bringing in triumphal procession through the city streets to the temple. On the last day of the feast, they did *not* do this, symbolizing the entry of Israel into the land of promise. It was at *this* moment, when this rite would have been observed, that Jesus stepped forth and proclaimed, “*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink, and out of his belly will flow rivers of living water*”, ...a reference, John says, of the Spirit (7:37-39). **They also remembered how God led them by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. This was commemorated by four gigantic candelabra** (75 feet tall), each with four bowls holding ten gallons of oil each. These were erected in the court of the women, and set ablaze, filling the entire temple area with light. These 16 torches could be seen for miles away, and **they reminded the people of the glory of the Lord, which had lit the way for the people of Israel in the wilderness.** The treasury was located in the court of the women, so **Jesus was standing right there** when He declared, “*I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life*” (v. 20). Again, in 9:5, as He prepared to heal the man born blind, He restated this claim, “*While I am in the world, I am light of the world.*” *He was about to display or make visible the works of God in the blind man, and in this way to show the Father’s character, compassion and power.* It would also make evident the religious narrow-mindedness of many of the religious leaders, who took offense at what was unarguably a work that could only be performed by God.

At the end of His public ministry, Jesus proclaimed, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know

where he goes. ³⁶ **While you have the Light, believe in the Light, in order that you may become sons of light**” (Jn. 12:35,36). This was *after* three and a half years of public ministry, preaching, teaching, healing, and casting out demons. It was *after* numerous tests and challenges from the Pharisees and religious leaders, which He answered well and even exposed *their* duplicity. It was *after* the excitement of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, with great crowds proclaiming His praises, calling out to Him to save them. It was even *after* a voice thundered from heaven and recognizably spoke to Him (12:28-30). **Jesus was saying that He was manifesting the presence of God through His words and deeds. Those who recognized and responded to that revelation, by trusting in Him, could be changed, transformed into children of light.** Those who reject Him, and the revelation that is displayed through Him remain in their own darkness. Incidentally, the next verse tells us that, in spite of all the signs and indicators that God was working within Him, most people were *not* believing in Him (vs. 37). They remained in their darkness. Jesus was well aware that people prefer darkness, because they do not *want* their sinful actions and attitudes to be exposed (Jn. 3:19,20). **Jesus came as Light into the world in order that everyone trusting in Him might not remain in the darkness** (vs. 46). Those who trust in Him, believe in the Father who sent Him (vs. 44). Those who reject Him will be accountable to the words and revelation of God expressed through Him (vss. 48-50). **Again, Jesus’ purpose is to multiply incarnational ministry. He intends to raise up an army of “light bearers”, people who radiate and express the heart of God in words, attitudes and practical actions.**

The apostle Paul picks up this theme in II Corinthians 3 and 4. He describes the Corinthians as a letter of Christ, experientially-known and read by all people (3:3). (This sounds amazingly like the “Word made flesh” revelation of John 1!) This “letter” is not written with pen and ink on paper, or even on stone tablets. Rather, it is written by the Spirit of the living God on their hearts. **The ability to “display the message of God” is not something we can do, in ourselves. This capability comes from the Spirit, who gives life and fills us with the glory (radiance) of God** (3:5-18). (Note both *life* and radiant *light*!) In fact, Paul says, “the God who said, ‘Light shall shine out of the darkness’ is the One who has shown in *our* hearts to give the light of the experiential-knowledge of the glory (radiance) of God in the face of Christ” (4:6). The apostle goes on to say that “we have this treasure in clay pots, in order that the extraordinary quality of the power might be of God, and not out from us” (vs. 7). In other words, **the life, the radiance, the message being seen through us should be more than what is natural.** It should convey that there is something very different, something Divine working in our lives. **This is not some idealistic notion. This is the plan of God. It is what He intends to do with us.** We are *not* to be walking like mere men (cf. I Cor. 3:3,4). **God has made it possible for us to walk in the power and goodness of the Holy Spirit, to display His life through us to others.**

You can understand why it is so important that we mature and learn to walk in the Spirit. When we do not, we are not displaying the life of God. When we walk in the flesh, compromising with sin, we only show failure, selfishness and hypocrisy. We do not have to live that way. Life in the Spirit is so much more joyful and fulfilling. **Sadly, so many never experience the abundant life of the Spirit. Many do not even believe it is a possibility, yet it is at the center of God’s plan for spreading the gospel.** Paul wrote, “...you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; *walk as children of Light* (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them...” (Eph. 5:8-11). **There is a choice delineated here. We can either choose to learn to walk as children of Light (by the indwelling power of the Spirit), ...or we can participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness.** There is an underlying belief, or misbelief, and a determination of the will. We either believe that this life in the Spirit is a possibility, and choose to go after it, or we choose to disregard it and live in the flesh. We either choose to try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, or we disregard Him and choose to live to please ourselves.

As we look back on the NT church, it is clear that they had a strategy for ministry. They funneled new converts into small groups, where they were all focused “upon the same thing”. They were devoting themselves to the doctrine of the apostles, the honest sharing with one another, taking meals together, and interceding for one another in prayer. These excited, new Christians fed off one another’s passion and zeal, and quickly discovered the truths of this article. **The Holy Spirit was sought and received by them, because they desperately wanted to be filled with the life of God.** They understood *this* to be the core of what new life in Christ was all about. **As they experienced Him, their lives and motivations were radically changed.** They began to love each other, support each other, help each other, sacrifice for each other. Their zeal and love spilled out beyond the confines of their groups to their friends and neighbors. They helped the lost and needy, the weak and despised. **It didn’t take long for people to take notice. This led to opportunities to share the gospel, and it also gave credibility to the message.** Outsiders saw their joy, ...the *practical service*, ...the amazing *answers to prayer*, as God responded to His people, ...and they were drawn to find out more. **It was easy to preach the word in such an environment.** People responded to God, and new converts were directed into groups, focused “upon the same thing”.