

Theme: They Work With Darkness

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-13.

Text: Ephesians 5:11 -- "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." (RSV)

Proposition: As Christ's love guides them thro life's dark experiences, so Christians must give themselves to helping others in their black experiences.

Date written: August 29, 1958.

Dates and Places preached:

31 August 58, Sheridan, Wyo., 11a.m.
6 Sept. 64, Montrose, Colo. 8:20 a.m.

... they look like ...

... 2-1-12 ...

... "Take no part in the ...
... of ... but instead ..."

... as ... love ...
... experiences, ...
... in their ...

... 2-1-12 ...

... and ...

21-11-12

Introduction:

1. This is the annual Labor Day weekend which is observed as a holiday by many people all over the country. It is to honor the laborer, or worker, and to give dignity to labor itself, that we set the day aside. Usually we think of the worker in factory, store, shop or other industrial or commercial effort on this special holiday.

2. Most people work in daylight hours, 8 to 5, 9 to 5, 7 to 3, altho some work nite shifts in extra busy plants and industries. In most cases night shift work is done only on a partial basis, maybe a week or a month at a time, at the end of which one goes to a day shift on the same job and another worker switches to the nite shift for the same limited length of time.

3. Most such shift workers put in their time at jobs which are understandable to the average man as to the general methods and goals of the tasks. However, there is much activity that goes on at nite, and often only at nite, which is not understood by most people, which is not done on regular shift work, some of which is harmful to the extreme to persons and property, other of which is necessary to civilised life.

4. We want here to think about some activities of darkness, and in our meditation on what we might call Labor Nite activities we believe there is a teaching of Christian life which will be helpful to us.

5. "They work with darkness" is our theme. What does it mean, to both the non-believer and to the Christian?

I. They who work with darkness frequently are doing things which are harmful to persons or property.

Local breakin - last summer

mod. m. a. d. h. a. s. h. e. r. i. d. a. n.

1. Recently (nite of Aug. 14, 1958) our Sheridan Methodist, Congregational and Christian churches were broken into by thieves, who, in our case, splintered a door frame, marred 3 doors and some windows, and stole some Sunday School cash collections from a closet. Another church lost a valuable tape recorder and some money. These thieves, "breakin artists" as the paper termed them, were certainly ones who work with darkness.

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They got into the church by forcing a ground-level window on the east side of the church, where a close-by building and hedges and other shrubbery would make them harder to be seen by passersby. The work with darkness, to avoid being identified, detected, and punished for their wrongful stealing and destruction.

*total boy looking up
old man*

2. Some boys one evening recently (August 26, 1958) were returning home from an evening civic activity when they were stopped by two youths older than themselves. These youths stopped the boys by pulling from their pockets knives which flipped open at the touch of a button, commonly called switch-blade knives. The fellow with the longest such knife held it at the throat of the youngest, tho not the smallest, of the boys, when at that point the parents of one of the children drove up. With a threat, "you better not tell anybody, or we'll get you," the knife carriers slipped their knives in their pockets and walked rapidly on up the street. By the time the father who had driven up was told what had happened and started in pursuit, the offenders had disappeared. As good fortune would have it, the names of the knife-wielders were later ascertained and steps taken to prevent a reoccurrence. ~~These young "braves,"~~ ^{These} brave when armed with deadly weapons and picking on ones smaller and unable to defend themselves, like so many other cowards worked with darkness, when identity would be difficult and escape easier.

3. These two were relatively minor happenings in that the breakin boys got little of value, and the knife handlers hurt no one. Yet, they were of the same caliber and stuff that makes a crime big. ^{and had to be guarded closely} Had great amounts of money been in the churches a big robbery would have taken place, since the amount of booty seems to determine the seriousness with which we look on these things. Had a panic-stricken boy resisted or made a sudden movement, the knife-carrying youths might have killed, even tho not having planned to do so. Actually, the intent, method, and moral seriousness is the same, regardless of outcome of the action. To prevent worse acts of lawlessness, we, the citizens of this town, must actively aid our under-manned and under-equipped police in their sincere and diligent efforts, by better equipping and manning them, and thro alertness helping them nab budding criminals early.

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the knife-wielders were later recognized and eggs
taken to prevent a recurrence. These young "crowds"
were then asked why they were and picking on one
another and unable to defend themselves, like so many
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4. One can not, then, say of our community, "it doesn't happen here," for it does. That other communities may have more dramatic crime is no excuse for us to condone that which we have. We have here our workers with darkness. From my brief time in Sheridan I could give your additional illustrations of this fact. Let's stop it now.

4. We can ~~turn~~ from the local scene to the state, national, or international areas of life, and almost any day find in these evidence of the presence of those who work with darkness. Racketeers in labor, agitators of racial strife, corrupt people in public office, oppression and brutality toward minority groups by governments of totalitarian lands. Not all may work actually at nite, for as they become more powerful they sometimes openly practice their wrong-doing. The things they do are truly of a nature to cause shame and a desire for anonymity on the part of most persons, tho, and could graphically be described as works of darkness. They are ugly, cruel, wrong, or "black," as we say.

5. There is, however, another group of people who work with darkness, for whom we should be thankful.

II. They who work with darkness frequently are trying to prevent, counteract, or salvage worth from the acts of those who work with darkness to steal, harm or destroy.

1. We immediately think of the police, who guard us around the clock. In most cities they have a regular nite activity of checking your doors in businesses and public buildings to see that you locked up. They have prowl cars to spot orgcare away other workers with darkness. They are often equipped with first aid equipment to help ease the stricken and save life until more adequate medical help can be secured. They answer calls at any time in case of need by citizens of the area they serve. They spend time in patient and detailed tasks designed to trace and trap the professional criminal. Yes, we need to honor these men, our workers with darkness, for our good and our safety.

2. We could think of our firemen, our ambulance crews, our hospitals with their nurses and attendants, our doctors constantly on call. We think of our armed forces! planes, ships and other equipment constantly

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manned, to prevent an aggressor from taking our freedom in a surprise attack. There are workers in electrical plants, gas-producing plants and pumping stations, communications systems, and many others who work in dark hours for our convenience and safety. We do, indeed, have workers with darkness who work for our protection and welfare, many more of them than we usually realize. They work with darkness, literally, but not as perpetrators of acts that might be called dark.

3. Symbolically speaking, we might list as workers with darkness, because they are constantly against the doers of evil and dark works, the moral teachers and leaders of our communities; the churches, ^{and} Sunday School teachers, ministers, Scout leaders. Theirs is a battle for light and right. In fact, when we think of these folk, we are lead to think that

III. The greatest help in meeting the evil workers with darkness is available to him who puts his faith in Christ.

1. Star Daly is the pen name and public name by which a present-day writer is known. He has been called one of the greatest living mystics. As a youth and young man he felt a hatred of other people, a hatred which led him to rob and committ crimes. The state in which he lived was one with a law providing for the habitual criminal a sentence of life imprisonment upon his being convicted the fourth time of a crime, and this man had been sentence to life imprisonment. Even in prison he was rebellious, attempted to escape, and was severely punished. Following one of the more severe punishments, he began meditating, reading the Bible, and later had a vision, or experience, so vivid that now, nearly 30 years later, he can recount it in detail. It is most interesting. He had become a changed man as a result of this, because he had put his faith in Christ. Somehow, his release from prison came within a few years, because of his changed attitude and way of life. Since then he has been actively ~~xxxx~~ constantly in wining people to Christian faith. He has read and studied widely, and is something of an authority on mystic experiences. Today one of his big concerns, based greatly on his own early experiences, is to fight the criminal syndicates and elements of our land, which groups, he says, very possibly may take over our land if we don't turn to God. Star Daly is a modern example of our thesis

that to turn from works of darkness, or to fight workers with darkness, a faith in and acceptance of salvation by Jesus Christ is the greatest possible help. We could speak of many other actual people and events to prove our point, but this by Star Daly will suffice. The Christian faith is our greatest help in fighting darkness, its works and its workers. Accept Christ, then win others to Him.

IV. We might accurately include in this parallel that the greatest help in meeting any of life's dark experiences is our Christian faith.

1. Turning from our thought of wrong and crime as being works of darkness and their doers as workers with darkness, we think of pain, sorrow, failure in business, loss of valued material things. We know why these things were considered by an ancient mystic as the stuff of which "the dark night of the soul" is made. We know that bitterness over and rebellion at these things often is why workers with darkness, in the evil sense, become that way.

2. We believe that the 23rd Psalm is descriptive of the Godly man's hope and help in such things. We believe even more that the "man of sorrows," Jesus Christ, is the channel of help in guidance and strength by which to flood the dark night of the soul with the strong sunlight of hope and certainty of eternal righteousness. If this were our main line of thought today, we could illustrate interestingly and vividly that the greatest worker with darkness, in the sense of eliminating that darkness, is Jesus Christ, whatever the darkness is.

Conclusion:

1. We have spoken of workers with darkness.

a. We have mentioned thieving, destructive workers with darkness.

b. We have expressed our gratitude for and our need to cooperate with the many workers with darkness who seek to counteract the actions of these first, the evil workers with darkness.

c. We have thought even of the fact that in unhappy, painful, sorrowful experiences we are all workers with darkness, in a sense.

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10-11-11

2. We have said that the most-known and most-effective counter-agent to evil workers of darkness is by those who are sincere and faithful Christians. Such persons take seriously the spirit of Paul's words in Ephesians 5:11, whether they know them or not. These words are our text and our message today. They read, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."

3. We conclude that as Christ's love guides us thro life's dark experiences, so we christians must give ourselves to helping others meet and overcome their black experiences. In the best sense, with Jesus we must be workers with darkness. This is our Labor Day message.

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