

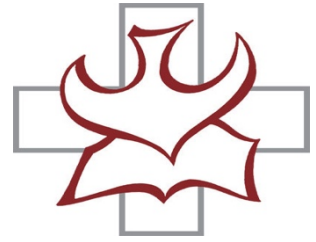
Enlightened in Christ!

The Book Of Ephesians Summer Sermon Series

John 9:1-11 Ephesians 1:15-23 Psalm 8

June 30, 2019

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God is working a grand plan in your life that began before the Creation of the world, when God personally chose you, by grace, in Christ, to be His very own. And then during your lifetime, He brought you to faith in Christ through the water of Holy Baptism. He also has given you the Holy Spirit who works in your life through His Word and Holy Communion to keep you strong, healthy, and growing in faith.

We are to be ever striving “*to know God better.*” **Both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to you so that you can actually KNOW GOD BETTER!**

In the book of Ephesians, St. Paul describes God's work in your life as “*shedding light*” on you:

I pray that the eyes of your heart will be **enlightened . . .**
Ephesians 1:18

Enlightenment is a work of God. It implies that we were first in darkness; that we could not see the good things of God. Many times in Scripture, sin is described as darkness. In the darkness of sin, we are lost; we stumble and fall over the Commandments of God; we do not know nor care about the things of God. We trip and fall into rebellion and immorality. We cannot see God at all. Sin is a darkness the blinds us.

So the Lord **sheds light** on us; He “**enlightens**” us. God works through the gospel to “**open our eyes**”. In Holy Baptism the light of Christ shined on you as God created faith and opened both your heart and your eyes as He forgave your sins. You see who Jesus is and His work of salvation for you. You see that his death and resurrection pays the price that set you free from sin and death. Everyone

of us is just like that blind man that Jesus healed at the pool of Siloam: **Jesus washed away our blindness in the pool of Holy Baptism.**

“**Enlightenment**” is a salvation image where God has rescued you from darkness and brought you into the light of Christ and His Kingdom. Now you can see! Now you can understand! Now you love God, His Word, and His Kingdom!

In the book of Ephesians, St. Paul highlights three specific things that we are to know and understand now that we are **enlightened**. Three things that work to keep your faith strong, growing, and healthy.

. . . having the eyes of your hearts **enlightened**, that you may know what is the **hope** to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious **inheritance** in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His **power** toward us who believe . . . Ephesians 1:18-19

1. THE HOPE YOU HAVE IN CHRIST

The first thing that you are to know and understand is the **HOPE** that you have in Christ. Hope is **confident faith**, **deep conviction**, and **certain trust** that God's promises are true and that God will keep His promises to you. Hope draws your attention to the future blessings that God has in store for you in the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Even though you cannot see the good things of Heaven,
you trust God and have faith in His promises:
THAT'S HOPE!**

Because you have the hope of Heaven, you can live with confident faith today, trusting God's promises one day at a time. **Hope** gives you a **stability in life**; **hope** allows you to **patiently endure** any pain or suffering that may happen in life; **hope** keeps you **anchored** to God's Word and promises so that you remain **faithful to Christ** throughout your life. When you have hope --- confident faith in God's promises --- then your faith is strong, growing, and healthy.

2. THE INHERITANCE THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO YOU

The second thing that St. Paul highlights for you to know and understand as God's **enlightened** people is the **INHERITANCE** that God has planned for you! An inheritance is something you get after someone dies: **BECAUSE JESUS DIED YOU GET AN INHERITANCE.** Your inheritance is first and foremost the forgiveness of sins; *because Jesus died you are given a gift: the forgiveness of sins.*

In addition, the New Testament uses the word “**inheritance**” to describe *the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting*. Because of Jesus’ own death and resurrection, you will inherit the gift of eternal life. Your dead body will rise from the dead, God will glorify it, and you will live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven in both body and soul!

We do not live just for the here and now; our **enlightened** focus is on eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven with Christ our Savior! You will be in His immediate presence, with no trace of sin nor evil, with all who died in Christ.

The Holy Spirit opens your heart and it **enlightens** you so that you can know and believe this great inheritance that you have in Christ! Even though you cannot see the good things of Heaven, you trust God and have faith in His promises! With **enlightened** hearts and eyes, you have hope, you understand your inheritance, and your faith is strong, growing, and healthy.

3. AND THE POWER OF GOD AT WORK IN YOUR LIFE.

The third thing the St. Paul highlights is that you know **GOD'S POWER** at work in your life. To emphasize how great God's power is, Paul uses 4 synonyms in one verse to describe it: **power, working, mighty, strength**. God’s mighty power is seen in Christ: in His Resurrection from the dead, in His Ascension into Heaven, and now as He rules all things in the world and for the benefit of His church.

Paul prays that those
enlightened in Baptism,
will ever grow stronger
in their
Hope, Inheritance,
and God's Power
at work
in and through them.

Christ’s (1) power, (2) working, (3) mighty, (4) strength is seen in your life in many ways:

- ✓ You have ever more confidence and conviction in God's promises as you trust and rely on God's word in your life
- ✓ You strive to live a holy and godly life
- ✓ You humble yourself and look for ways to love and serve other people
- ✓ You patiently endure all hardships, difficulties, and suffering

- ✓ You are a bold witness even in the midst of persecution
- ✓ You resist the devil's temptations, and crucify your sinful nature
- ✓ You hate what is evil and cling to what is good
- ✓ You live a life of repentance, always turning from sin, and always trusting in God's grace and forgiveness
- ✓ You live with a clear conscience and at peace with God and with men
- ✓ You remain faithful and loyal to God above all things
- ✓ You have a joyful heart and you live with thankfulness to God
- ✓ You have a deep desire to **KNOW GOD BETTER**; to learn His Word, to obey His Will, and to seek His Kingdom.

This is all the **power of Christ** is at work within you; His **(1) power, (2) working, (3) mighty, (4) strength** brings you to faith, keeps you in the faith, and enables you to live your daily life in Christ. The Holy Spirit opens your heart and **enlightens** you so that you can know this incomparably great power at work within you! With the **(1) power, (2) working, (3) mighty, (4) strength** of Christ at work within you, your faith is strong, healthy, and growing!

God is working a plan in your life that started before the Creation of the world and will not end until you arrive safely in the Kingdom of Heaven. In Baptism, you have been **enlightened**! In Baptism, God the Father has given you the Holy Spirit Who opened your heart and your eyes to know Christ as your Savior.

May your faith be strong, healthy, and growing as you continually learn more about, and persistently trust in, the **hope** to which He has called you, the riches of your glorious **inheritance**, and the **(1) power, (2) working, (3) mighty, (4) strength** of Christ at work in and through you! Amen!