

✠ Matthew 4:12-25 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

Before you believed, you sat in darkness. It doesn't matter if you remember it. It doesn't matter if you felt like you were sitting in darkness or not. Before you believed, you sat in darkness. For all have eaten the forbidden fruit of the desire to be like God, all have fallen short of the glory of the living God.

And all are reconciled to God by God's grace through the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ. Upon you the Light has dawned. To you has been revealed the knowledge and wisdom and glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. You no longer sit in darkness. Upon you the Light has shown.

You have been called out of darkness into the wonderful Light, into the life of the living Christ. Having been blind, unable to see God, now you behold Him face-to-face. Having been lame, unable to take up your mat and go home, now you leap about as antelope in the meadows, walking, nay running into the open arms of your heavenly Father. Having been deaf to God's Word, now you hear: you are well; depart in peace. Having been mute, unable to sing the praises of God, now your voice rings out with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven in the hymn of heaven: holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth.

The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the land and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.

What becomes of you, upon whom the light of Christ dawns? You are transformed. You cease to be what you were and become what you were not. You were slanderers and fornicators, drunkards and god-haters; you were sons of the evil one, going about doing your fathers business, sowing seeds of discord and hostility and hatred. But the brilliant light of Christ burns away all that you were.

Its intense beams of pure light shine into the shadows of your heart and baptizing you with fire, burns away the evil that was so securely lodged there. A blackened heart of stone becomes a living heart, beating with the heartbeat of God. A miserable mind of filth and lust becomes the holy dwelling of the mind of Christ. Now you are children of the Light. Now you go about doing your heavenly Father's business of loving your neighbor and counting no wrongs and sowing seeds of peace with God and goodwill toward men. Once you were not a people, but now you are a people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Those who dwell in darkness see only darkness. They do not think themselves evil or sinful or detestable because they cannot see themselves. In fact, those who sit in the darkness most often think themselves good and decent people because they match the blackness that engulfs them, they cannot make out the scenery. But we who are exposed to the light of Christ see our sin and recognize just how ugly and sinful we truly are. Thus it is we, upon whom the light of Christ has dawned, that eagerly repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Repentance defines your life in the light of Christ. For repentance does not merely mean we feel bad for lying to your moms and dads or husbands and wives. Repentance does not

mean going around trying to right all the wrongs we've done. It does not mean that we're going to really try and amend our lives, shooting for better behavior and a cleaner rap sheet in the eyes of God. Repentance means that we who sat in the region and shadow of death, upon whom the light has dawned, now know how far gone we really are and how dependant we are upon that light. Repentance means that we do not merely recognize and apologize for our sinful acts, but that we recognize that we are sinful, different from God, and so are all the more eager to cling solely to Christ who alone is our righteousness.

Then, when the light of Christ shows you this, that Christ is your righteousness, making you cling to Him alone, then you are living in repentance and faith. Then His Spirit within you will cause you to move in His ways, eating and drinking from the chalice and paten of life. Then you will be moved to joyfully right wrongs, confess sins, forgive sins, do good works, and sing hymns of praise and adoration to God our Father.

Without the illumination of the Son of God we could not and cannot know the Father. In the light of Christ, we see God for who He really is: our heavenly Father. He is our Creator and Redeemer and Sanctifier. He guides us in the way of truth and sets our feet upon the firm foundation of His Word.

But without the all-pervasive light of Christ, God would remain to us an unknown god who exacts vengeance and destroys us at His whim. That is the god the world that sits in darkness sees: a god who hates them and desires their destruction with tragic deaths, unstoppable storms, and 9/11-type catastrophes. This is the darkness that is all around us even while we walk in the light.

We follow Jesus though it seems to profit us little in this life. Our husbands and fathers still die unexpectedly and tragically, for seemingly no reason. Our spouses still leave us for others. Our employers still mistreat us. Life still goes very wrong. But what is that compared to following Jesus?

What profit is there in fishing nets and fishing boats? What good is there in staying with those who do not follow Jesus? None. Fishing nets and fishing boats, whatever keeps us from following Christ, from walking in the light, is not worth having. For they do not heal your sicknesses or carry your guilt and shame. They do not make you well. They do not show you the face of God.

The things of this life are fleeting, a blowing of the wind, a spec in time. They do not matter. What matters is that when Jesus says, "Follow me," we leave whatever we are, dropping whatever it is that defines us, our fishing nets and fishing boats, and pick up our cross and follow Him. He is now what defines us. He gives us meaning and purpose. Not some superficial meaning of living a fulfilled life in family, friends, jobs, and hobbies, but fulfilled in knowing that we are loved by our heavenly Father.

That is the only really fulfilled life: living in the knowledge of Christ that your heavenly Father loves you and cares for you. Then your family and friends, jobs and hobbies will be sweeter on your tongue and more beautiful in your eyes. For they are what your heavenly Father has given you. But you find satisfaction in Him, not in the things He gives.

Jesus goes about teaching in our synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing our sickness and diseases. And to Him are brought those whose hearts are broken,

whose spirits are downcast within them, whose lives are full of guilt and shame, and He heals them. He heals you. Follow Jesus, walk in the light.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠