

## “Reflecting God’s Light”

Ephesians 2:1-10

What I liked most about the Harry Potter series of books is that all five of us in our family enjoyed reading them and I looked forward to the family discussions that followed. One such discussion centered around Harry’s Cloak of Invisibility, which he drapes over himself to disappear at critical moments in his magical adventures. It shields him completely from being seen by others and it cannot be worn out by time. It becomes such a prized possession that Harry decides to keep it at the end of the 7 book series and pass it on to his descendants.

Would you like to inherit the Cloak of Invisibility? There are times when we’d all like to disappear. When we unknowingly say something embarrassing in front of a group of people. When we work up our courage to ask someone out and the person responds with, “Let’s just be friends.” When our minds go blank in the middle of an oral report at school or a sales pitch to a client. When the ball is passed to us at a critical point in a game and it goes right through our fingers Braydon Edwards style. Or as one of our confirmands said, it would be good to become invisible in the middle of a confirmation class when we’re writing our faith statements.

If only we had the cloak of invisibility! At other times we want to be like Adam and Eve and hide because we are ashamed of what we did. We don’t want

people to see what we're doing. We prefer our privacy and become uncomfortable when someone arrives at our front door without calling first. In the words of Paul to the Ephesians, we are "following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient." (2:2)

This is strange and supernatural language, like something out of the magical world of Harry Potter. But we know what Paul is trying to communicate. We are well aware we often behave in a very worldly way, under the influence of powers and spirits that lead us away from God. In verse 3 Paul writes that "all of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else." Sometimes we let our ambition, greed, jealousy, and anger get the best of us. We know we are heading in the wrong direction and we ought to turn around. But changing direction is tough. We would rather just vanish. Poof! Become invisible.

For those who want to disappear, I recently read in a magazine article that science is in the process of providing some help. Researchers have demonstrated that they are now able to cloak 3 dimensional objects. These materials deflect light waves around a body, like water flowing around a smooth rock in a stream. The key is to keep the light from bouncing back, because if light is reflected then the object can be seen. This research has been funded by the National Science

Foundation and the U.S. Army Research Office. The Army is very interested for obvious reasons. We may not be that far away from a Romulon cloaking device for all you Star Trek fans.

The bottom line is that if you want to be invisible, you have to find a way to bend light around yourself. If light is reflected, then you're going to be seen.

It is clear from Paul's letter to the Ephesians that God wants the divine light to bounce off us, instead of bend around us.

Paul says in verse 4 that "God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved."

We become alive with Christ when we are baptized into the Christian community. In the words of Paul in Galatians 3:27 – "As many of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

In Romans 13:4 Paul writes that as Christians we are invited to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

So we are "clothed" with Christ, writes Paul, and we "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be a properly dressed disciple of Christ. Jesus become for us a "Visibility Cloak" – one that reflects the light of God and makes us visible to the world.

Bending light and becoming invisible is bad. Reflecting light and being

visible is good. It's all about putting on Jesus – the Visibility Cloak.

Now for those of us who don't feel we deserve this special garment, Paul stresses in verses 8 and 9 that “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”

The Visibility Cloak is a free gift of God, given to us to cover our many sins and shortcomings. We don't earn this cloak, and we certainly don't deserve it. Instead, God gives it to us so that we will reflect his light to the world. All we have to do is wrap ourselves up in it, not unlike when I deliver a prayer shawl to one of you in the hospital, a gift from the women of Divinity that you eagerly open and immediately wrap yourself up in it with a thankful smile on your face.

In the same way, God is not interested in hiding us and he certainly doesn't want his light to bend around us. Instead he clothes us with Christ so we will be visible signs of his presence in the world. By grace, God moves us from darkness to light, from invisibility to visibility, from an undercover existence to a communal and servanthood existence. He takes pleasure in showing us off, as signs of how loving and forgiving and powerful and creative he is.

We have been created for a life of visibility. Paul writes in the last verse of our text, “For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

Our way of life as Divinity Lutheran Church and as followers of Jesus Christ is to be a people who reflect the light of God in all of our relationships with people and with God's creation. So where is God's light being reflected amongst us?

God's light is reflected in our youth. One of our 9<sup>th</sup> graders who was confirmed a year ago, handed me a hand-written page on the way out of worship a few weeks back. It was entitled "True Deliverance." Kari wrote these words . . .

As most of you already know, the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in confirmation class are required to write a faith statement. How do you feel about that? Some of you would probably say something along the lines of, "Yeah, so what?" or "Why do I have to do this? I have nothing to write about." Well, I felt like that too, when I had to write mine. To be completely honest, I had to rack my entire brain just to make it long enough. So I can relate. But I didn't go through the trouble of writing this paper just to complain about everything. I'm writing this because I want to share my real faith statement about what God has truly done for me.

I won't make this too long because if you're anything like I was, you probably don't want to hear the "God talk" all over again. However, I will tell you right now that if you think God is about rituals or if you feel he's mad at you, he is not. I can honestly say God is about love and relationships. Does this sound familiar? Well, I'm not just saying it to be all important. I'm saying it from my personal experience and because it's true! And it took a very long time to get me

to say that.

I, at one time, hated church. I didn't like sitting through services and writing all the time. Not only that, I was in a very bad place myself. Without getting into a ton of detail, I can say there was a time I absolutely hated my life and I didn't believe in anything they taught us in confirmation. I had a lot of other things going on inside of me – it was like a constant struggle with anger and depression. I felt like I was trapped in a cold, dark place all alone. But the part about me being alone was never true, because Jesus was there all along, sending people to talk to me and keep me going. He had faith in me.

Since I had been able to say with my own lips, “I believe in Jesus,” the anger, the hatred, the depression all began to fade away. I was free. The darkness was gone! A seed of faith was planted in me, forever growing with each new day.

God's light is reflected in our youth, like Kari. In the same way, God is not interested in hiding any of us and he certainly doesn't want his light to bend around us. Instead, he plants a seed of faith in us in baptism and as we grow older, he clothes us with Christ so we will be visible signs of his presence in the world.

By grace, God moves each of us from darkness to light, from invisibility to visibility, from an undercover existence to a holy communal and servanthood existence. He takes pleasure in molding and working through each one of us as signs of how loving and forgiving and powerful and creative he is!

Go out from here and reflect the light of God. Go out from here and shine!

And may the peace of God . . .

Sermon Hymn - #671 - Shine, Jesus, Shine

Closing Hymn - #677 - This Little Light of Mine