

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction

When I moved from London to the Country one of the things I noticed most was how dark it was at night. In Hackney, Where I lived it was never really dark. There were street lights every where and on the odd occasions when I was called out in the middle of the night it was really easy to find my way around.

Here in Fowlmere it is an entirely different matter. There aren't many lights even in the villages and the minute you go out into the lanes the darkness is enveloping. Doing evening visits is a real challenge when you are going to a new address. It is very difficult to see. So I now carry a torch in my handbag and a more powerful one in my car. Light is necessary for life, we need it to grow and to thrive; we need it to stay safe and to live our lives. When we find ourselves in the dark it can be tricky.

Paul is writing to the Christian church in Thessalonica. They had come to faith through Paul's teaching but faced various challenges, not least, substantial opposition from the pagan community in which they lived who were trying to get them to return to their previous sexual immorality and worship of pagan gods. They also were preoccupied with the thought that Jesus would return from heaven and some of them had stopped living and carrying out their lives and were just 'waiting around' for Jesus to come back.

So Paul writes to encourage them. He tells them, "⁴ *But you, friends, are not in the darkness, and the Day (the day of Jesus's return) should not take you by surprise like a thief.* ⁵ *All of you are people who belong to the light, who belong to the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.* " The society in which they lived was a dark place with sinful practices and many temptations but the best way to be prepared for Jesus' return was to be living Christian lives.

We talked earlier about the difference between radiating and reflecting light which is clearest in a dark place. When it goes

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dark there is no reflection but if we are radiating light from within the light stays whatever happens.

Paul tells his audience that they are children of the light and that their lives should show that. In a society it is easy to reflect the ideas and behaviours of the people and the world around us. We need the light of Christ in us to radiate into the situations we are in.

Let me show you what I mean. *Take black torch.* When I go out at night I need this torch to shine out. *Turn on.* There is no light. It doesn't seem to have power.

Open torch – draw out the handkerchiefs

Concerns about Money, work and relationships; pride, envy, guilt, fear, anxiety, these are all things that we can carry around inside us. They affect the way we live and what we do but they don't enable us to show God's presence in our lives, they don't show his love and holiness. In order for us to shine with God's light we need the right power within us. We need God's Holy Spirit. *Put batteries into torch and turn on*

Paul says: "⁷ *It is at night when people sleep; it is at night when they get drunk.* ⁸ *But we belong to the day, and we should be sober. We must wear faith and love as a breastplate, and our hope of salvation as a helmet.* " Our faith in Jesus and his love within us protect us from the temptations of the world around us and the knowledge that Jesus has won our salvation keeps our thoughts and hearts in the right place..

As I've shown using the torch it is important to know where our strength and motivating power comes from. Where do we find our security? Where do we look for peace and security – is it Money? Jobs? Relationships?

In our current situation as we are dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic our sources of comfort are all being tested and shaken. The things that used to give us security have been taken away or undermined so we need to be grounded in Christ. The only sure source of strength and security comes

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from Jesus Christ, his love for us and the salvation he won for us when he died on the cross to give us life in all its fullness.

So today let us remind ourselves that we are people of the light and ask God to fill us with his Holy Spirit and give us the power to shine his light in our lives and in the communities where we live.