

# “Son-Glasses at Night”

a sermon based on

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

and delivered on

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at

Cherry Valley United Methodist Church

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If you look at the sermon title “Son-glasses at Night,” S-O-N as in the Son of God glasses you probably recognize the play on words. You may even recognize the song reference: “Sunglasses at Night” by Corey Hart, which brings me to a point of self-awareness. By drawing upon a song from my adolescence, I’m compelled to acknowledge that the music of my youth is now considered “classic,” or what we used to call oldies.

This is where we’re going to go, today. I don’t know about all of you, but for me I still think of myself as young. I have a hard time grasping that I’m an adult – a grown-up. Just looking in the mirror and seeing my hair color (or what’s left of it) should really instill an awareness that I’m not a teenager anymore. (Something Susan tries to remind me of each time I that injure myself on some physical task that my body is no longer up for.) Just the other day, I dropped something in the garage that made a loud thud. Susan came running in a panic to see what was wrong. I told someone that I don’t get why she freaks out at every loud thud, except that she has had to drive me to the emergency room more than once. Maybe it’s not unreasonable afterall.

In both passages of Scripture today, we hear a message about self-awareness. In the Gospel, there’s this sense that each servant knows his own capabilities. Two make good on it. One doubts himself even though he knows what his master expects and knows his master’s temperament. That’s what the master said isn’t it, “You know that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?” (Mt 25:26) ... “You, yourself, just said, that you know I am a harsh man.” (Mt 25:24) “You let fear, blind you to what even I know that you’re capable of...” Right?

In that passage from 1 Thessalonians (which is where I’d like us to spend our time), Paul begins saying “For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night... But you, beloved are not in darkness, that that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day, we are not of the night or of darkness.” (1 Th 5:2, 4-5)

We are not children of the darkness. We are children of light. We are children of day. But... How often do we find ourselves grasping for hope in the night. Tonight, we will have a new moon. The night will be darker than usual, without even a faint sliver of moonlight. So where is our hope?

Paul was trying to encourage Christians who were facing real persecution for their faith. Paul was trying to encourage these people who had grown up in a pagan world in which they’d already experienced not only the failures of life but some successes. The temptation when faced with challenges is to go back to what worked – back then. Right? The temptation is to go back to what we once knew at the expense of what we’ve come to know. I don’t have the physical capacity to use a handsaw like I could when I was eighteen years old; but at fifty-three, I can afford a power saw. So what do I do when the electric goes out? I can get out the hand saw, or I can remember I’m not that young guy anymore and hood up the generator. Do you see where I’m going with that? I hope it makes sense.

For the church in Thessalonica and everywhere at the time, there was this sense of expectation that Jesus should have returned by now. Some people were starting to wonder whether the challenges of living this new way as a Christian – living this new way of looking at life as something to be shared – really was worth it. When things get tough, our inclination is to have a pity party. Isn’t it? It doesn’t even matter how good we have it or how privileged we are. Does it?

It seems as if every time I go to look at the news, there's a story about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex – Harry and Meghan – and how persecuted they feel by the press. Really? That's the awful thing of life? That some writers are being mean? What about the privilege of being heard merely because of your birth or marriage?

I don't want to pick on them, because we all have that same tendency. Each one of us in this room enjoys white privilege. I know that statement stirs up a lot of angst. I don't have any privilege because I'm white. I don't get special treatment. That's true. But, I can drive through any town in America without worrying that I will be pulled over by the police merely because I don't look like I belong there. I can shop fairly confident that my every move isn't being monitored. I can go to car dealership without getting the third degree about my ability to pay before I even get to test drive a vehicle. (I worked at a car lot. I saw it.)

This is where the dark night blinds us. We don't see racism because it doesn't affect us, and as Christians we reject bigotry. We don't see that our privilege isn't something "special" but something that should be universal, but isn't.

In the song, *Sunglasses at Night*, we hear:

I wear my sunglasses at night  
So I can, so I can  
Watch you weave then breathe your story lines

I wear my sunglasses at night,  
So I can, so I can  
Keep track of the visions in my eyes.

While she's deceiving me.  
She cuts my security."<sup>1</sup>

Do you hear the angst? The fear? Those sunglasses are meant hide his eyes from the world, and they darken his vision even in the night focused on deception and fear for security.

We are not children of the night. We are children of light. We're nor children of fear, but of hope and of promise. That means when we put on our son-glasses (S-O-N) glasses, we do so differently. We do so that we can see in the darkness rather than hiding from it. We do so not to run from the world, but to claim hope for ourselves by seeing the people in it as Jesus does. We do it with the privilege of knowing our place in the kingdom, not arrogantly, but,

"look(ing) not to (our) own interests, but to the interests of others. Let(ting) the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross." (Pp 2:5-8)

That means that when we open our eyes to the injustices present in the world: racism, sexism, deprivation, we don't hide behind these son-glasses that assure us of our salvation, but that we see the God-breathed dignity deserved by each and every soul. Then we claim our privilege to do something about it.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.google.com/search?q=sunglasses+at+night+lyrics&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_enUS922US922&oq=sunglasses+at+night+lyrics&aqs=chrome.69i59j0l4j46j0i22i30l2.4746j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=sunglasses+at+night+lyrics&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS922US922&oq=sunglasses+at+night+lyrics&aqs=chrome.69i59j0l4j46j0i22i30l2.4746j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8) Accessed 11/14/2020.

It means that we refuse to look at any other human being with disdain, but compassion and hope. I'm not being pollyannish, here. Remember, even though Jesus called Pharisees and scribes hypocrites, he still went to their homes to eat with them and enjoy their company. Why? Was it because he was overlooking their flaws and failures? No. It was because he saw in them the image of God. He saw in them misguided notions of right and wrong, often with good intention even though the road to Hell is paved with those good intentions.

So for us, that means in the midst of the hateful rhetoric that's going on following the recent elections, that we need to be intentional about seeing the good in those who disagree with us. Rather than accusing a friend or family member of bigotry merely because they voted for Donald Trump, without considering maybe that they were voting against a fear of what the Democrats would do – rather than accusing someone who voted for Joe Biden as hating America because they disagree with Republican policies – we can – and should look through and beyond those things at people who God so loves that he sent Jesus. Right?

This doesn't mean that we have to agree with everybody, or that we have to abandon our own viewpoints; except when they are guided by bigotry or hatefulness. Instead it means – looking at one another to see the light that dwells. It means taking time to listen to the why's. I'm convinced more often than not we all have the same goal, but different ideas about how best to achieve it.

For those Christians in Thessalonica, it meant that even in the night they could find light. Even in a night with no moon, the faint glimmer of stars can guide us – even as the example of those who've gone before us in faith can help us to find our way no matter how dim that way seems. Dawn is coming. But it doesn't happen all of a sudden.

When we put on Son-glasses and claim Jesus' vision for our own, we not only surround ourselves with light, but we lead others away from the deception that God's love is somehow limited. Then as children of light, we extend the hope that we have received. AMEN.