2/7/16 Living in the Light Eph. 5: 6-14

*We are called “children of Light”*

During World War II my father was in the Navy and Merchant Marines. For us children that meant all of us were taught how to sail before we learned how to drive. We learned all the different parts of the boat, how to unfurl the sail, how to catch the wind and come-about, all the nautical terms like starboard and port, how to tact and about buoys.

You see when you drive a car usually you can see the paved street or dirt road and know that that’s the safest place to drive your car, on the road, that’s not the case particularly in a river or bay area. Picture the two feet of snow we had two weeks ago and not being able to see where road is. Suddenly you are not sure where the road edge is and if the road is straight ahead of you or curves and if you’re not careful you can end up in a ditch or worse!

When you are in a river or a bay you can’t see where the sandbars are that will leave you high and drive in low tide or where a hidden rock is that will damage your hull, the bottom of your boat. It is the buoys that help direct you that show you where the main current is. Sometimes the buoys have bells or sirens and a light to guide your way safely through the passage.

What’s interesting is that before radar and sonar, it was the sailors themselves that placed those buoys for other sailors to follow. They wanted others to learn from their mistakes when a rock took their boat out or a sandbar left them high and dry. They are the ones that placed the buoys to light the way so those who came after them would find safe passage. It is the symbolism of lights guiding your way I want us to focus on today.

In this season of Epiphany we have been studying THE LIGHT of the world, born on Christmas, revealed to the Magi, the word who became flesh and dealt among us to show us how to live. The darkness tried to extinguish THE LIGHT, but could not! THE LIGHT still shines in the darkness for all to see, THE LIGHT that is both an invitation and a choice. Do we follow THE LIGHT with our lives? Do we become Children of THE LIGHT?

I find it interesting that the way the church calendar is set up we leave the season of Epiphany and immediately go right into the darkness that each and everyone one of us has to confront. The season of Epiphany ends at Ash Wednesday. Does anyone know why it is called Ash Wed.?

Traditionally the palms left over from Palm Sunday are burnt and the ashes saved and used on the following Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is a reminder of our death. During the service each person comes forward to receive the ashes, usually put on the forehead as they hear the words:

*Dust you were and to dust you shall return. Receive the Good News of Jesus Christ and be saved!*

For me it is a yearly reminder that although my spiritual being will live on, my physical body will die. It gives me an opportunity to prepare, do a spring house cleaning so to speak, and get rid of anything holding me back or to work on that which I need to grow in. It amuses me that our culture often gets this wrong based on what they call the day before Ash Wednesday.

What names have you heard for the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday? Fat Tuesday, Pancake Day, Donut Day, Fasnacht Day, Shrove Tuesday, Mari Gras, to name just a few. There is a religious tradition behind some of this as the celebration of Passover is linked to Holy Week as it is believed Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples.

The celebration of Passover remembers when the angel of death passed-over the houses of the Hebrew slaves because they followed God’s instructions and put the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. As soon as the angel of death visited all of the Egyptians who did not put the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, they told the Hebrews to leave and leave quickly. The Hebrews did not have time to put the leaven/yeast in their bread for it to rise so they had to cook it what they had quickly for their journey and ate what we now call flatbread or pita. So now every year when a strict Jewish home is preparing for the Passover celebration they clean out all of the leaven/yeast from their kitchen. Instead of throwing it out they make pancakes, and donuts, or what the Germans call Fashnachts.

That is the tradition behind Fat Tuesday, but the idea of having to give up everything you love or everything that is fun is just the opposite in my view of what happens as we head into this season of Lent.

We are leaving the season of light and the first thing we are confronted with is that we will all die. What is it we need to do to prepare? If we choose to follow THE LIGHT of the world, to become children of THE LIGHT how then should we live? How are we to be buoys in this world showing others the way to eternal life? That is the invitation and the choice we all have to make.

There is a litany that has various forms and I copied this one off from the web that says for me the types of choices we need to think about as we head into this season of lent. I invite you to take out the *Thought on the meaning of Lent* and let us read it together:

**Thoughts on the meaning of Lent**

FAST from food
FEAST on the Bread of Life

FAST from senseless noise and clutter
FEAST on being silent with God

FAST from gossip
FEAST on words of gratitude, appreciation, and encouragement

FAST from selfishness
FEAST on selflessness

FAST from bitterness and confusion
FEAST on acceptance and understanding

FAST from drinking, smoking and lethargy
FEAST on taking care of your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit

FAST from discouragement and despair
FEAST on hope and joy

FAST from thoughts that weaken and problems that overwhelm
FEAST on prayer that edifies and strengthens promises that inspire

FAST from complaining and asking "why me?"
FEAST on appreciation and asking "why not me?"

FAST from anger and frustration
FEAST on patience and peace

FAST from judgment and condemnation
FEAST on forgiveness and mercy

...and make this journey far deeper and richer than it ever has before

As this season of Epiphany comes to an end I invite you to consider living out what it means to be a child of The LIGHT as our lives are the buoys for all to see and follow. If you do not know Jesus as the Light of your life or if you are new to First Baptist Church and would like to become a member here, please see me at the end of the service.

Let us take all of this to the Lord in prayer as we share together as a *Family By Choice* our joys and concerns….Amen