

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

When you are a teenager life can be pretty interesting. There are a lot of things going on – a lot of new experiences and a lot of learning. Those years can be a lot of fun but they can sometimes be a lot of trouble too. Parents aren’t always thrilled when their children get to the teenage years because their kids don’t always make wise decisions. I won’t tell you about my teenage years but I will tell you about my sons. He is a good kid but sometimes he didn’t pay attention to what he was doing and he would get into trouble. The frustrating part for me was that when I asked him why he did something, he said, “It seemed like a good thing to do at the time or sometimes it was, “I don’t know.” The words that Paul has for us here are good words for teenagers and really for all of us: **“Live a wise life.”** The best and really the only way to do that is to, **“Understand the Lord’s Will,”** and then to, **“Make the Most of Every Opportunity.”**

Paul has just finished talking about how we are **“children of the light.”** God’s children and because we are God’s children we have this command from God, **“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise.”** Maybe a better way of saying this would be, **“Pay Attention to what you are doing.”** That’s easier said than done. How many times have you not paid attention and then have to mutter something like, “Whoops,” or “Sorry about that.”

We all want to be a wise person but how many times do we make unwise decisions? You may be thinking that’s not me but where do you think the saying, “Hind sight is 20/20,” comes from? People who have made unwise decisions and looked back and can see where they went wrong and that does include all of us – maybe some more than others but none of us is perfect. So how do we learn and make better decisions – wise decisions in life?

Paul tells us, **“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”** Learn from your mistakes and learn from God. Learning from your mistakes can be pretty painful – a lot of times you remember those lessons longer but it is much easier to learn from

God. Sometimes that takes a little longer and we know from school it might take some repetition but it is worth it and it helps us to live as a “wise” person rather than an “unwise” one.

And so I read my Bible and attend Bible Classes and listen to God’s Word as much as I can so that I can begin to understand his will for my life and I pray. I talk to God and then I make sure I listen to him too. Sometimes he brings his Word to me in an amazing way – a sermon or devotion that just seems to hit the problems I am having in life or a friend to remind me of a certain part of God’s Word or a member who tells me how God is helping them through a problem. I try and pay attention and I try not to be foolish or unwise and I ask the Holy Spirit to help me understand God’s will for me and for my family. But I don’t always get it and so Paul gives us an example of foolish living – a picture of what he is talking about.

He writes, **“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”** A little wine is fine but too much can lead to reckless decisions. When you get drunk or get high on drugs you are letting your sinful nature take control of your decision making process – some people say you become uninhibited which means you don’t have too much self-control and of course when your sinful nature is in charge, good things don’t happen. The sad thing is that some people think you can’t have a good time unless you get drunk and they make that their goal for Friday or Saturday night.

God doesn’t want us to get high by filling up with wine or beer or whatever your substance of choice is. He wants us to experience a greater that can only come by being filled with the Spirit. That high brings us **“peace”** when we come to him in repentance. It brings us **“hope”** when the world around us is telling us there is no hope. It brings us **“joy”** in troubling times because no one can steal our spiritual treasures.

Last week we sang our favorite hymns and heard some scripture and many of the comments were positive about how that was an uplifting service. Well, we were doing what Paul was talking about when he wrote, **“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.”** Music is part of our Lutheran heritage and an important part of our worship. Our songs and hymns proclaim Jesus’ love for us and they lift us up as they fill us with the Spirit.

So Paul tells us then to, **“Make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”** Make the most of every opportunity but opportunity for what? Well, since the days are evil, it is every opportunity to be strengthened and to be built up and to grow in God’s grace. And also to

take every opportunity to snatch someone else out of the arms of evil by sharing the gospel and inviting them to be strengthened and built up along with you.

The days are evil. You know about the many evil influences are all around us – abortion portrayed as a women’s right (forget about the unborn child’s right) and homosexuality and same sex marriage viewed as a constitutional right trying to justify it by making it legal even though it flies in the face of God’s law. And there are other evils lurking around the corner to attack us when we least expect it. So watch out and take every opportunity to be prepared – to arm yourself against the attacks that Satan and the world loves to throw our way.

God has saved us so that we can be his people. So that we can leave today filled with peace and renewed with strength – not to be perfect, but to pursue that goal to be wise in God’s eyes. May God be with each one of you this week as you strive – one day at a time – to live a wise life – trying to understand the Lord’s will and guided by his wisdom that comes through his Word. Amen.