**Homily on Ephesians 5:8-19 and Luke 17:12-19**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Beloved in Christ, today’s readings are rich with the call to walk as children of light and to give thanks to God for His great mercy. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, speaks to us about living in the light of Christ: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). In the Gospel, we hear of the ten lepers whom Christ healed, and how only one returned to give thanks to God (Luke 17:12-19).

There was once a small village nestled in a valley surrounded by high mountains. For as long as the villagers could remember, the valley was always in shadow. The people of the village lived in darkness, their lives filled with fear and confusion. They stumbled often and quarrelled amongst themselves, for they could not see clearly. But they were used to the darkness, and many believed it was normal.

One day, a man named Alexios, a wanderer from a distant land, arrived in the village. He carried a lamp, and its light was like nothing the villagers had ever seen. It illuminated the paths, revealed hidden dangers, and made everything appear as it truly was. Alexios told them, “This lamp comes from a source high above the mountains, where the sun shines brightly. If you follow me, I will show you the way to the light.”

Some of the villagers laughed at him. “We do not need your light,” they said. “We have lived in the shadows all our lives, and we are fine.”

But a few believed him. They took lamps from Alexios and began to follow him up the steep mountain paths. The journey was hard, and some were tempted to return to the village, but those who persevered eventually reached the summit. There, they saw the sun for the first time. The brilliance of its light filled them with joy and wonder. They realised how much they had missed living in the shadows.

When they returned to the village, they tried to share the light with others. Some accepted it and began their journey to the summit, but many still preferred the darkness. They said, “Why should we change? The light is too bright and uncomfortable.”

Before Christ, we lived in darkness ignorance, sin, and separation from God. But through His coming, we have been given the light of truth. To walk as children of light means to leave behind the works of darkness: selfishness, pride, and anger. Instead, we are called to live in love, goodness, and truth. As St John Chrysostom says, “The light makes all things manifest; it shows what is good and what is evil, so we may choose wisely.”

The villagers who followed Alexios up the mountain remind us that the journey to live as children of light is not easy. It requires effort, faith, and perseverance. But the reward the joy of living in God’s truth is worth every struggle.

The Gospel reading shows us another vital aspect of our faith: gratitude. Ten lepers cried out to Jesus for mercy, and He healed them all. Yet only one, a Samaritan, returned to give thanks. Christ’s words to him are striking: “Your faith has made you well” (Luke 17:19). The other nine received physical healing, but the Samaritan received something greater: a soul transformed by faith and gratitude.

St Basil the Great teaches us that gratitude is not simply good manners; it is the proper response of a soul that recognises God’s mercy. When we give thanks, we acknowledge that every good thing comes from Him, and we open our hearts to receive even greater blessings.

The message of today’s readings is clear. To walk as children of light means to live in truth and holiness, turning away from the works of darkness. And to live fully in the light, we must cultivate gratitude, recognising God’s abundant mercy in our lives.

As we reflect on today’s readings, let us also remember that we are amid the Advent Fast, a season of preparation for the glorious Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This holy season is a time when the Church invites us to cleanse our hearts, refocus our lives, and walk more fully as children of light. The readings from Ephesians and Luke beautifully align with the purpose of the fast.

The Advent Fast is a journey, much like the villagers ascending the mountain. We are called to leave behind the shadows of sin and the distractions of the world, so we may draw nearer to Christ, who is the Light of the World. Fasting, prayer, and acts of charity are the lamps we carry on this journey. They illumine the path before us and help us recognise the things that truly matter, love, humility, and holiness.

Moreover, the Samaritan leper who returned to give thanks reminds us of the spirit we should cultivate during this season. The Advent Fast is not only about discipline but also about gratitude. As we await the celebration of Christ’s Nativity, we remember the great gift of His coming into the world to save us from darkness. Gratitude opens our hearts to His presence and allows us to receive Him with joy and humility.

St Gregory of Nyssa beautifully describes this transformation when he says, “The soul that journeys toward God begins to reflect the light it seeks.” Through the fast, we prepare ourselves to reflect Christ’s light more fully, just as the Samaritan leper, healed and grateful, reflected the mercy he received.

As we continue our journey through this holy season, let us embrace its meaning. Let us cast off the works of darkness, walk as children of light, and, above all, give thanks to God for His boundless mercy. By doing so, we prepare our hearts to receive Christ anew, that His light may shine brightly in us and through us, bringing hope to a world still longing for redemption.

May the Advent Fast be a time of true spiritual renewal, leading us to the radiant joy of the Nativity. To Him be all glory, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.