

Living KBS
Colossians 1: 13-14

**First Presbyterian Church
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“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.” We gather apart from the pace of the world for this hour in which we consider who we are in Christ. This morning we are concentrating on just this one verse. From it, we learn that we are those who have been *transferred* from one spiritual address to another. We no longer live in the DD, the Domain of Darkness but now reside KBS, in the Kingdom of the Beloved Son.

Several years ago, a young woman from our church travelled from our privileged bubble of comfort in the US to an impoverished section of Romania, a region where even basic hygiene is a luxury. She learned, though, that there are worse kinds of poverty than material lack. These bonds of darkness cut across all cultures. Our team joined others from around the world at the Smiles Foundation, a mission agency dedicated to restoring joy to the Romanian orphans through the love and message of the gospel. During the week, members of the team made home visits for prayer. In my over-busy, abundant life, I take for granted how regularly I interact with people who have been everywhere and done everything. Our students met people who had never been anywhere. They found that the presence of Americans coming from so far away to visit a very humble home was a great encouragement in itself to the people. But even more could be shared across the language and culture divides.

In one home, this woman met a man with deep, angry self-inflicted scars up and down his arms and on his chest. Through the translator, he told of the grief of losing his mother at too early an age, of the defeat of not being able to earn enough to feed his family, and the despair that his wife was dying of AIDS. He was wounded at every level. In that house, at that moment, the young woman from our church felt compelled to roll up her sleeves and show this man two things. First, she showed him the crisscross of light scars up her forearms from an earlier season of her own depression. She touched her scars with two fingers, then brought those fingers to her lips. Then she touched her fingers to the man’s wounded arm. His tears began to fall. Then she showed him the second mark. It was a small tattoo on

her left wrist. She had the translator tell the man the words, “By his wounds, I am healed.”

He replied by telling her that it would take a miracle of God to heal his wounds. For on the literal level, in his despondency, he had not even cleaned his wounds and infection could well have killed him. On the spiritual level, he knew he had no personal strength with which to heal his inner wounds. The next day, our young woman sent over to him a stone with the Romanian word for “hope” painted on it. It seemed to change everything for him. She showed me the picture of his smiling face as he showed the rock to his wife. The communion of scars between the two brought home the truth that God still raises the dead and brings hope to the hopeless. He still leads us out of the domain of darkness and into the Kingdom of his Beloved Son.

Paul’s words make us think of a radical change of spiritual address. We lived once in a shadowy realm ruled by forces of darkness. We could not see our way out. We could not extricate ourselves from this bondage. But it’s as if God the Father sent a moving truck of light to pick us up and take us to a new home. We often call moving trucks *transfer trucks*. God transferred us from the domain of darkness. He got us out. He relocated us. He delivered us. He cleared the way for us as he carried us in Jesus to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” That’s what we’re exploring today. To realize the magnitude of this transfer, we want to think about the darkness in which we once lived. Darkness falls in many forms upon us as we come under its dominion. Today, let’s consider just four:

1) Darkness is ignorance. By nature, we are simply blind to the truth and stumbling around in the dark not knowing any better. In Ephesians, Paul reminds the believers how once they were “without hope and without God in the world” (2: 12, NIV). We may well have lived for years not knowing that there is a world of light and life for which we have been made. Paul goes on to speak of those without Christ who walk “in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.” Those days in the dark we didn’t know any better. Truthfully, we didn’t want to know better. We didn’t want to know that God makes a claim on our lives. We were in the dark about how he loves us. We thought life with God would be like a straight-jacket on our desires, boring and legalistic and deadening. Our hearts were hard and our minds were darkened and we were in bondage to a futile way of life.

I remember a new guy in our men's group back in North Carolina. He used to come roaring up to church in a red convertible Boxster, always late, always in a hurry, but so happy to be there. He had lived a fast, rough life. His metabolism normally ran about five notches higher than the rest of us. In his dark years, you could add caffeine, alcohol, and drugs and you had a guy moving at lightning speed, but all the while driving blind. He had made and spent a lot of money; he had run through a few marriages. He gobbled up experiences; he rarely slept. When he came to Christ, it was a beautiful sight to see how week by week the light would shine in his darkness, and the dawn would break on his night. Sometimes he would say, "I'm so jealous of you guys. I feel so behind! You've been studying this stuff for years. Now I'm 37 years old and I'm 37 years behind. I didn't know anything."

When this guy came out of the dark of ignorance of Christ, he just couldn't get enough of the light. He rejoiced in his new address. No longer living in the neighborhood known as the DD, he been transferred to the KBS and he couldn't get enough of his new digs. He reminded all of us why we study God's Word. The road from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of the beloved Son is paved with learning what God requires of us and what God does for us. We leave the dark streets of ignorance and enter the brightly lit streets of knowing God's will.

2) Darkness means secrets. In spite of our willful ignorance, enough of conscience remains in us and our culture that we still hide the cruel and disgraceful things we do. We lie and keep the truth closed up in the darkness. We hide figures or replace files or swallow up information. We let others hang out to dry while we stone-wall them with blank looks and feigned surprise. Each of us has rooms of darkness within which our secret shames reside. There are some things we have done or had done to us that we admit to no one. Not even to ourselves and not to God. Of course, the longer we keep these secrets in the dark, the more power they hold over us.

In Genesis we read of Joseph's brothers who sold him into slavery and tried to forget about even having a brother. They hid their deed from their father Jacob for years. But the guilt and fear haunted them. Even when we do not acknowledge their existence, these closeted shames shape our behavior and our ability to relate to others. We can live for years and years under the domain of a darkness we will not admit, even as it casts a shadow of shame over all we do.

So Paul writes in Ephesians, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that is visible is light” (Eph. 5: 11-12). So “walk as children of light. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”

When we bring the secrets into the light, we experience tremendous relief. As long as we cling to ownership of these secrets, we are DD, in the domain of darkness. But confessing them to God, perhaps in the presence of a trusted person, can lead to a spiritual change of address. For we note that KBS, in the kingdom of God’s beloved Son, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. As I John tells us, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth of God is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all wrong.” The moving truck of God’s grace drives down all streets of confession and repentance and the discovery of the forgiveness of sins. The transfer from the DD to the KBS occurs through this dynamic of bringing secrets and shame to light in order to experience confession and the gospel of forgiveness.

3) Darkness means evil. In John 3, we read “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” In the realm of darkness, people are in bondage and continue to do horrible things to themselves and to one another. They can’t stop the violence; it’s as addictive as a narcotic. They can’t stop the rage or the abuse. They can’t stop sexualizing everything; they can’t stop manipulating. They learn to believe their own lies. They can even believe that blowing up a bus full of people is pleasing to God. The darkness binds us to continuing evil with inky, black chains.

But the moving truck can arrive even on these frightening, sharp avenues. I once heard a mafia hit man testify to the transforming grace of Christ. He was on his way to kill the pastor who had named the truth of his soul earlier in the day. Then the gospel of Christ’s love and forgiveness, even for him, touched him and changed him. War veterans who dream of being knee deep in the blood of those they have killed have found peace in the forgiveness of Christ. Angry folks find calm in the one who has taken their rage upon himself. Manipulators and chronic cheaters, those who run through sexual relationships like new pairs of shoes have all found the acceptance that gives them freedom to stop taking. Spiritual addresses can be changed.

4) Darkness means lostness. The over-riding quality in all these types of darkness is simply being lost. In the DD, you cannot see your way. You get off track. You are wandering with no way to find home. Christianity is a rescue religion. It's all about the great search and rescue mission which the Lord undertook. He came into our darkness and shone his light so that we might find a way home.

Psalm 139 tells us:

If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
And the light about me be night,'
Even the darkness is not dark to you;
The night is as bright as the day,
For darkness is light with you.

Our God sees in the dark! He sees where we are in our lostness and he knows how to find us. The dominion of darkness, so impenetrable to our weak eyes, cannot stop him. He sees past all our deception. He sees through closed hearts. He sees through the thick protective layers our woundedness has covered over our souls. He can find us anywhere, even in the depths of the hells we create.

I wonder if you have experienced this. How many of us here can say, "I was blind but now I see. I was lost but now am found?" Around you are those who testify to the change of address Jesus our Savior can create. He has done it. He has died to take away sins. He has defeated the power of evil. He has overcome death. His light could not be extinguished by the darkness. Jesus has triumphed, so he can get you out of the DD. But here's the deal. You've got to say Yes. He's outside the house of your darkness. The motor on the truck is running, He wants to drive you to the kingdom of light. Once you get in the truck with him, nothing can stop him. No power in heaven or earth can get prevent the transfer.

But you've got to come out of that inky dark house. See the lights on the moving truck. Walk out. It's not easy. You have to be willing to leave behind the contents of the house of darkness. The habits, the possessions, the guilt, the shame, the pride, the willfulness, the stubborn ignorance, the secrets. All the dark ways that are so familiar and even comforting. Just go out the door. Don't lock it. Don't linger. The moving truck of grace is on the street. It's in your driveway. Its lights are shining in the dark. Go to that light. Your Savior is driving. He is Lord and he can get you out of the DD right now. You can live KBS today. Will you go? Just

say, “Yes, Jesus, save me! I leave the dark behind. Take me home. Get me out. You are the Lord who saves.”

Perhaps you already know this. Well for you who already live KBS, here’s the missional edge to the sermon. Sometime this week, you will write a note—an email, a letter, or just a sticky on the refrigerator. After your name, just put the letters, KBS. When someone asks, tell them that the Son of God has brought you out of darkness into the kingdom of his light. If you feel shy, just blame it on your pastor! But give the signal, subtly, by signing KBS.

This is the news today. One has driven through the night to take us out of the streets of despair to a home of love and healing. The moving truck has arrived. You don’t have to stay in ignorance or secrets, in evil or lostness. Look, the door has opened. He beckons you. Will you get in?