

Sermon for March 15, 2026 – Lent 4

Ephesians 5:8-14 (EHV)

Theme: You are Light in the LORD

- 1) Continue to Walk in the Son-Light
- 2) Shine His Light in the Darkness.

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, ⁹for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. ¹⁰Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, ¹¹and do not participate in fruitless deeds of darkness. Instead, expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention the things that are done by people in secret. ¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes things visible. ¹⁴Therefore it is said, “Awake, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

What picture comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “in the dark”? Perhaps you may think first of fear: seeing nothing but blackness, unable to know where you are, where you came from, or where you are going. But if you stay in that darkness long enough, something else happens. The darkness can start to feel like a warm, weighted blanket. Your body relaxes. Your mind drifts. You slip into sleep.

Let’s apply that to humanity’s relationship with God. The Bible says: *God is light. In him there is no darkness at all.*ⁱ But Adam and Eve’s sin separated them from God – casting humanity into spiritual darkness, unable to “see” the truth about who we are, where we came from, or where we are going.

In that darkness, everything humanity claims to know about life’s most important questions – Where did we come from? What is the purpose of our lives? What does the future hold? – is only imaginative speculation. Why? Because without God, who is light, we cannot see. Apart from Him, we know nothing.

Still worse, just as physical darkness can become comfortable and lull a person to sleep, so also the world’s spiritual darkness lulls people into a false sense of security. It whispers: “Do whatever feels right; follow your heart. Don’t worry about consequences.”

Because people don’t see, they don’t know – and they stop caring. “What is true? What is real? Can anyone really know? Does it even matter?” The darkness murmurs: “Just go back to sleep.”

But God refuses to leave us sleeping in the dark. He knows that spiritual darkness ends in everlasting death. Therefore, He sent His Son into the world to be our soul-saving light. Through Jesus’ perfect life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, He removed the barrier of sin that separated us from God. Then He sent the Holy Spirit to shine the light of His Word into our hearts, so that through faith in Jesus, we ourselves become light - drawing others to Christ as we reflect His love in this dark world.

With the apostle Paul as our guide, let us consider this truth under the theme: **You are Light in the LORD.** 1) Continue to Walk in the Son-Light. 2) Shine His Light in the Darkness

Part One: Continue to Walk in the Son-Light

Our sermon text is from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a major centre for the worship of the goddess Artemis. Her temple dominated the city's skyline and its way of life. Immorality and greed were woven into the fabric of its religion and culture – much like how immorality, materialism, and self-indulgence permeate our society today.

But the Christians in Ephesus were different from their neighbours, just as we are called to be different from ours. Paul writes:

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Notice that Paul does not say, "You were once in darkness," but "You were once darkness." Neither does he say, "Now you are in the light," but "Now you are light in the LORD." Their very identity changed. Like us, these Christians had once lived in ignorance of God, serving themselves, driven by the desires of their sinful flesh. Their lives, no matter how successful they appeared outwardly, were spiritually empty - without true purpose, hope, or meaning.

But then Paul came with God's Word. God's Law showed them their sins and their desperate need for a Saviour. And the Gospel? It revealed a God unlike any they had known – a God who not only created the universe, but had chosen to save them from their sin before the world began.

Despite their sins and rebellion, God sent His own Son into the world. Jesus kept God's law perfectly for them, winning the righteousness they needed to stand before Him. Then He offered up His life as the full payment for all their sins. He did everything the Old Testament had promised – He even rose from the dead to confirm their forgiveness. Through Christ, God reconciled them to Himself.

And the LORD did not stop there. He sent the Holy Spirit to awaken faith in their hearts. Through Holy Baptism He adopted them as His children. They who were once darkness had now become light in the LORD.

Dear Christian, what the LORD did for the Ephesians, He also did for you! He chose you before the world's creation. He saved you through Christ's work on the cross. He sent His Spirit to enlighten your heart through the Word, awakening repentance and faith so that you might belong to Him. Even though you were once darkness, you are now light in the LORD.

And because that is who you are, Paul says:

Walk as children of light.

Identity comes before conduct. You do not walk as a child of light to become light. You are already light in the LORD. And because you are, you can now walk as a child of light.

But how do we do that? By staying connected to Jesus.

Why does a full moon shine so brightly in the night sky? Not because it has any light of its own. It shines only because it reflects the light of the sun. So it is with you. You are God's light in this dark world – not because you can produce light on your own, but only because you reflect Jesus.

You reflect Jesus by looking to Him alone for forgiveness, life, and salvation. And as you receive His gifts in Word and Sacrament, as you remember your baptism and meditate on His promises, His light shines through you – just as the sun's light shines on the moon and into the darkness.

Paul continues:

Walk as children of light ⁹for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Light is essential for plants to grow. Without it, they remain barren and fruitless. The same is true for Christians. The LORD wants His light to produce fruit in us - everything good, righteous, and true.

What is good, righteous, and true? God tells us in His Word. He teaches us to love Him above all things and our neighbours as ourselves. As we bask in His forgiving love toward us, we learn what it means to love others: to use our words and actions for their good so they might experience God's love through us.

Just as God made the moon to reflect the sun, so He has created and redeemed us to reflect His Son's saving love into the world. For that reason, the Apostle Paul encourages us:

¹⁰Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord,

I can't tell you how often people have asked me questions like: "Pastor, can I read this book, watch this show, or play this game as a Christian, or is that a sin? How far is too far on a date? Is it OK to get a little buzzed on alcohol or marijuana?"

Do you notice the problem with those questions? They rarely reflect a heart that wants to please the LORD, but a heart that wants to please the sinful flesh without upsetting God. "How close can I get to the edge without falling over?"

That is not how God wants His children to think. He wants the light of His love in Christ to move us to ask different questions: "How can I please God with my life? How can I seek a spouse in a way that honours Him? How can I enjoy His good gifts – food, drink, entertainment, relationships - with thanksgiving, in ways that bring Him glory and give me genuine joy and peace?"

And the answer is simple: Continue to walk in the Son-light. Meditate on God's Word. Apply it to every part of your life. Trust that everything He commands is for your protection and good. Above all, bask in Christ's forgiving, saving love for you. Remember who you are in Him and the everlasting future for which He saved you. You have been saved for a purpose: to be His light in your home, among your friends, in your workplace, and in your community.

Part Two: Shine His Light in the Darkness

Because we are light in the LORD, Paul not only urges us to walk in that light; he also warns us about the darkness:

¹¹and do not participate in fruitless deeds of darkness.

The word translated as "participate" here is related to the word "communion."

Don't have communion with the deeds of darkness. Notice that Paul is not saying we should avoid the people living in the darkness. No, God saved us to be Christ's light – to love them, serve them, and witness to them - praying that the LORD bring them out of the darkness into His marvellous light.

What God warns against are their deeds. Don't listen to the world when it says: "Watch this depraved show, listen to this immoral song, play this violent game, join our humanistic causes, and accept our new morality."

Everything the sinful world promotes – every philosophy, ideology, or moral system that does not flow from God's Word, whether conservative or liberal, licentious or legalistic, capitalistic or communist – ultimately comes from the darkness and not the light. Even when such systems echo bits of God's moral law written on human hearts, they cannot lead us to God; they cannot save, and they will always be twisted by sin. Why? Because they do not come from the clear light of God's Word.

As John writes: *Everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, boasting about material possessions—is not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.*ⁱⁱ

That is why the LORD encourages us to avoid "communion" with the world's fruitless deeds of darkness.

Paul writes:

Instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention the things that are done by people in secret.

Expose the evil in the world? But how? Should we picket at Parliament Hill? Try to shut down every offensive event through public protest? Put biting condemnations on our Church sign?

No, God has not called us to change society through politics or protest. He has called us to be His light. As Jesus Himself said, *“Let your light shine in people’s presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

Paul explains:

¹³But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes things visible.

Exposing the deeds of darkness is as simple as letting your light shine. It begins by not joining in the sinful behaviour around you.

When your co-worker invites you to crude joking, decline. When a friend begins to tear someone down with gossip, ask them to stop. When a classmate encourages you to watch or share something inappropriate online, say, “No, that’s not something I want to do as a Christian.”

And when people ask why you won’t join what they are doing, speak the truth in love. Say, “I don’t want to sin against my God, who forbids these things in His Word. I want to honour and thank Jesus for forgiving all my sins by avoiding the evil that once had such a grip on me.”

People might react to such honesty with anger. They might mock you as judgmental or narrow-minded. If that happens, remember why: God is exposing their hearts through your witness.

And just as it is painful to wake up to a sudden bright light after a long sleep in a dark room, so it hurts when God’s law awakens our conscience. Nobody likes it, but it is necessary. Even this painful exposure is part of God’s mercy, as Paul writes:

¹⁴Therefore it is said, “Awake, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Yes, the light of God’s law must first wake people up to see their sins and repent before the Gospel can have any effect. How so? Think of it in terms of medicine. Most people will not seek the help of a physician or psychiatrist until they are convinced they need one. The same is true with the Gospel: nobody is willing to repent and believe in Jesus until they are convinced of their need for Him. Only when awakened to the truth of their sins will they be ready to receive their Saviour.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you were once darkness. But, through the mercy of God in Christ, you are light in the LORD. He has forgiven all your sins. He has awakened repentance and faith in your heart through His Word and Sacraments. He has claimed you as His own.

Because of His great mercy, continue to walk in the Son’s light – listening to His Word, trusting His promises, and finding your identity in Him. Then, like the moon looking at the sun, you will shine Jesus’ light in the surrounding darkness. Through your words, actions, and quiet faithfulness, God will awaken those He places in your life to the only truth that sets them free: Christ crucified and risen for us.

Yes, *“Awake, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”* Amen.

ⁱ 1 John 1:5 EHV

ⁱⁱ 1 John 2:16-17 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 5:16 EHV