

The Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15, AD 2026

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Away with Darkness, Awake to Light

Ephesians 5:8–14

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 1:2

FOR AT ONE TIME YOU WERE DARKNESS, BUT NOW YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD. WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (FOR THE FRUIT OF LIGHT IS FOUND IN ALL THAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT AND TRUE), AND TRY TO DISCERN WHAT IS PLEASING TO THE LORD. 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 BECOMES VISIBLE IS LIGHT. THEREFORE IT SAYS, “AWAKE, O SLEEPER, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST WILL SHINE ON YOU.” (vv 8–14)

3.

What does it mean to live in DARKNESS?

For the man born blind, living in darkness wasn't a metaphor. It literally means that he can't see where he's going or what he's doing. Ever. He has no visual concept of the world. He has no experience of light. He doesn't even know what light is really like.

To be blind is to be in one kind of darkness.

But St. Paul speaks of another darkness, a deeper darkness. A darkness that's not physical but spiritual. What does it mean to live in DARKNESS when your vision is 20/20 but THE EYES OF YOUR HEART are blind (Eph 1:18)? What's it like to be a creature living in a created world but ignorant of the Creator or even hostile to Him?

St. Paul exposes some darkness that he says shouldn't even be named, described, or joked about among us: SEXUAL IMMORALITY AND ALL IMPURITY OR COVETOUSNESS, FILTHINESS, FOOLISH TALK, CRUDE JOKING (Eph 5:3, 4). He doesn't need to describe such things in detail. We know what he's talking about. We know it when we hear it. When know it when we see it. And we know it when we take

part in it. He warns that those who participate in such things have NO INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND GOD (Eph 5:5).

Now some of us have direct personal experience with this kind of DARKNESS. We've been there. We've done that. Knowingly, or unknowingly, we've dabbled in things that we shouldn't. And we've got the bumps, bruises, and scars to prove it. We've played with fire, gotten burned, and burned others.

And a few of us may be more naïve or innocent of the depths of darkness. That's a good thing. There's no virtue in experiencing darkness firsthand. No one is better off for having sown their wild oats. Tasting the fruit didn't actually give Adam and Eve any true wisdom. So we should pray for protection from the darkness for ourselves, certainly, and especially for our children and grandchildren.

Still, even they've picked up hints of it here and there—in stories or movies, from friends or online. You'd have to be blind not to glimpse the darkness occasionally. And all it takes is one little taste for the imagination to begin to go dark. The sinful nature doesn't need much convincing to get hooked. A branch that starts out crooked doesn't need to be trained to go more crooked. It happens naturally. We're born bent toward darkness, and the algorithms are happy to drag us in ever deeper.

So all of us know—in some way—what it's like to live as if God didn't matter, as if no one else mattered either, and as if I mattered most.

That's DARKNESS.

St. Paul even says, "AT ONE TIME YOU WERE DARKNESS" (v 8). How can he say that? Because of the company darkness keeps with sin and death. YOU WERE DEAD IN THE TRESPASSES AND SINS IN WHICH YOU ONCE WALKED (Eph 2:1). We WERE BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH, LIKE THE REST OF MANKIND (Eph 2:3). You WERE DARKNESS.

2.

But no more. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not forever. There's no going back. WHAT FELLOWSHIP HAS LIGHT WITH DARKNESS (2 Cor 6:14)? "There is no Christian twilight" (Winger, 561).

And yet, the temptations are real. The old life beckons. We live in the world every day. In business, at school, in the private moments of our lives, the pull of darkness is real. Will we be OF THE WORLD or go back to being OF THE WORLD (John 17:16)?

Through Baptism, we have put off the deeds of darkness. Would we change out the brilliant white robe of righteousness for filthy rags? Through Baptism, WE HAVE already BEEN BURIED WITH CHRIST (Rom 6:4). Would we reopen that grave and start playing with death again? How could we?!?

That would be as crazy as the man born blind deciding to put out his eyes after Jesus made new ones for him. He could no longer believe or act as he did before. Having seen Jesus, he couldn't *unsee* him. Having had his mind opened to the truth, he couldn't deny that truth—not without killing something that had become alive inside of himself.

Consider the way he teaches the teachers about Jesus. THE MAN ANSWERED: “WHY, THIS IS AN AMAZING THING! YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE HE—Jesus—COMES FROM, AND YET HE OPENED MY EYES. WE KNOW THAT GOD DOESN'T LISTEN TO SINNERS, BUT IF ANYONE IS A WORSHIPER OF GOD AND DOES HIS WILL, GOD LISTENS TO HIM. NEVER SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN HAS IT BEEN HEARD THAT ANYONE OPENED THE EYES OF A MAN BORN BLIND. IF THIS MAN WEREN'T FROM GOD, HE COULD DO NOTHING” (John 9:30–33). He shined a light on the whole situation. He spoke the truth. AND THEY CAST HIM OUT (John 9:34).

THEY CAST HIM OUT—the darkness wanted nothing to do with him. But THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD was glad to welcome him (John 9:5). Remember that the next time the world wants to chew you up and spit you out for being a Christian. To be rejected by the darkness is a good thing, even when it's painful. I picture the blind man leaving the synagogue, turning away from the Pharisees, and running into Jesus:

“DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?”

“WHO IS HE, SIR, THAT I MAY BELIEVE IN HIM?”

“YOU HAVE SEEN HIM—with those new eyes of yours!—AND IT IS HE WHO IS SPEAKING TO YOU”

“LORD, I BELIEVE.” AND HE WORSHIPED HIM (John 9:35–38).

Why would he ever want to go back to that darkness? Why would *you*? That's not who you are. That's not where you belong.

1.

In the light is where you belong. NOW YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD, St. Paul says (v 8). LIGHT IN THE LORD is different than mere ordinary light. God has made the

sun an ordinary light. But, through Baptism, He has made us to be extraordinary, supernatural light. Remember how Jesus said to the disciples, “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD” (Matt 5:14)? He Himself is the light, *and* you are the light *in Him*.

St. Paul even calls us CHILDREN OF LIGHT and talks about FRUIT OF LIGHT (v 8, 9). That’s a striking image. Light doesn’t bear fruit. Well, this light does! So the one who meditates on God’s Word IS LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY STREAMS OF WATER THAT YIELDS ITS FRUIT IN ITS SEASON, AND ITS LEAF DOES NOT WITHER (Ps 1:3). And EVERY HEALTHY TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT (Matt 7:17). And the seed that’s sown ON GOOD SOIL PRODUCED GRAIN, SOME A HUNDREDFOLD, SOME SIXTY, SOME THIRTY (Matt 13:8). And that’s the complete opposite of UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS (v 11). What should be done with UNFRUITFUL WORKS? Don’t let them hide and grow in the darkness. EXPOSE THEM (v 11)!

Let the light shine on the dark corners of your sinful nature, and let it shine on the darkness you encounter in the world. Don’t tolerate it. Don’t ignore it. Don’t cover it over. Expose it.

That’s what Jesus did. He exposed the darkness of sin and death. He didn’t let them hide. He put them out there for the whole world to see. Do you really want to know what it looks like? Are you curious about dark things? Does sin still intrigue you? Then grab hold of a crucifix and take a close look. Read Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John on the passion of Jesus, His suffering and death. There you see fully revealed the UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF DARKNESS. It looks like crucifixion. And let that put the darkness to death in you!

But THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT (John 1:5). Easter happened. There’s where Lent leads. The tomb is empty. The light lives and speaks and washes and feeds and make you light.

So WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (FOR THE FRUIT OF LIGHT IS FOUND IN ALL THAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT AND TRUE), AND TRY TO DISCERN WHAT IS PLEASING TO THE LORD (vv 8–9). How do we do that? In the light of God’s Word. God has created us for good works. He has called us out of darkness to be light. He has raised us from death TO WALK IN THE NEWNESS OF LIFE (Rom 6:4). If we’re not sure exactly what that looks like on any given day or in any given situation, then look deeper into the light. It won’t blind you. It’ll help you see better. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word. Test your life, your thoughts, your works by the teaching and instruction of Holy Scripture.

And it's like St. Paul himself is the light from a lighthouse. His words keep swinging over us. He lights up the rocky shore. He shows us the things to stay away from. But he's also protecting us from harm. Stay away from the things that are dangerous, and sail smoothly on the water where Christ is with you.

Finally, hear the beautiful refrain that may have be an early hymn or the Church or part of their baptismal liturgy: *AWAKE, O SLEEPER, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST WILL SHINE ON YOU* (v 14).

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:7
