

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Fourth Sunday of Lent
Saturday, April 2, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, April 3, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

“Walk as Children of Light”

Eph. 5:8-14

We are in the middle of the Lenten season. Lent is a penitential season. That is, it is a season of the church year that we spend additional time reflecting on the suffering of Christ on account of our sin, expressing sorrow for our sins, and renewing our devotion to God.

Some people express their repentance and devotion by giving things up during Lent. Whether you give something up or not is a matter of personal choice. However, the motivation behind giving up worldly pleasures is, in some small way, to show that we want to have nothing to do with the “unfruitful works of darkness.”

However, doing this becomes a problem if we treat our Lenten vows in the same way that New Year’s resolutions get observed. New Year’s resolutions also sometimes make it six weeks, and then we go right back to doing the things that brought about our need to make resolutions. Or worse yet, we take the Mardi Gras approach and sin as much as we can just prior to “giving something up,” and then we can’t wait for Lent to be over.

Lent is a season of repentance, which means real change occurs and we see ourselves in a different way. Giving up meat or chocolate for Lent is not done because there is anything inherently sinful about meat or chocolate. We give up things that bring us temporary joy so as to discipline ourselves for the rest of the year. It teaches us to have the will to refrain from the sinful things that bring us temporary joy.

Rather than taking part in the “unfruitful works of darkness”, we expose the darkness of our lives to the light of Christ. And walking as children of the light, knowing that we have been forgiven through His suffering and death, we never want to return to the shadows of the dark, shameful world.

Lent is a time of renewal, a time of starting over. Because of Christ’s work in your life, this very day you have started over with a clean slate. Through the call to repentance and forgiveness that comes from God, you have the sure promise that we are no longer held accountable for the actions of our past.

During this Lenten season, God calls us to wake up, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead.” In our Epistle lesson, Paul was not speaking to the pagans in the city of Ephesus, he was speaking to the people in the church. The ones who called themselves God’s people needed to wake up and rise from the

deadness of their sins.

Isaiah had the same problems with the people of God in his day. In our Old Testament lesson, God speaks through Isaiah and says: “Who is blind like the one dedicated to me, blind like the servant of the Lord? He sees many things, but he does not observe them and has paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing.”

Who is more blind than the person who has had their eyes opened to the truth of God and chooses not to see? Or who is more blind than the person who sees the goodness, and mercy, and grace, and truth about God, and pays no attention to it?

Sometimes we do not want to pay attention to what God has told us, because then our dark deeds will be exposed to the light of Christ. We will be like the Samaritan woman at the well from last week’s Gospel lesson who had the most embarrassing sins of her life exposed before God Himself.

When the light of God’s truth shines down on our lives and exposes our most embarrassing sins, we get very uncomfortable. That is good. If our sins are pointed out to us and we don’t get uncomfortable, then we should begin to worry.

Being called to repentance by God is a very good thing, because we know that those sins have been washed away in the

waters of our Baptism. We have that sure promise that our Baptism is a “washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit,” as St. Paul says in Titus chapter 3.

It is a washing, and it is a renewal. It is a daily renewal. With our repentant hearts, every morning, we get up out of bed with a clean slate. With the light of Christ shining in our hearts, our sins are continually exposed, and we are continually forgiven.

It is such a blessing and a comfort to know that every day, every moment of your life, God is with you. There are many moments when we might say, “God, I wish You hadn’t see me do that.” But we should rejoice that God exposes our sins, because He forgives them, and He does not remember them any longer. Once your sin has been washed away, it is as if it never happened. That is the joy and peace of the Gospel.

This Lenten season, is to be a time of renewal; is to be a time of devotion to God; and is to be a new beginning which carries over into the Easter season, throughout this summer, and throughout the rest of your lives.

We don’t need to make excuses for the shameful things we have done in the past. We are forgiven. God answers our prayer, He creates in us a clean heart, and the light of Christ shines in you. Walk as children of light. Amen.