

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Lent 4
Saturday, March 18, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 19, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

“Walk as Children of Light”

Ephesians 5:8-14

We are in the middle of the Lenten season. Lent is, of course, a penitential season. That is, it is a season of the church year where 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, we must not 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. Repentance involves having an actual change of mind. You think differently than you did before.

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,” the Word of God exposes the darkness of our lives. As children of the light, you are forgiven – washed clean in the waters of Baptism; all your deeds of darkness carried to the cross by the Son of God Himself. The obvious question is: “Why would we ever want to return to the shadows of the dark, shameful world?” Yet, that is where we find ourselves again and again.

Lent is a time of renewal, a time of starting over. Because of Christ’s work in your life and your Baptism, this very day you have started over. Luther says in his catechism concerning Baptism “that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Through the continual call to repentance and forgiveness that comes from God in Baptism, you have the sure promise that you are no longer held accountable for the actions of your past. There is no reason to dredge up those memories. There is no reason to suffer the pangs of guilt. Christ’s suffering was sufficient for you. And in response to this, we cannot live our lives in such a way that our words and actions are indistinguishable from the darkness of those who are outside of the Kingdom of God. You are children of light.

God calls us to wake up. Paul says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead.” This is most likely a line from an ancient hymn. In our Epistle reading, 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. Rise up out of the darkness and walk as children of light.

Isaiah had the same problems with the people of God in his day. In our Old Testament reading, 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.”

Soren Kierkegaard, the father of existential philosophy (who is probably my favorite philosopher – faithful Danish Lutheran), he said, “There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true. The other is to refuse to accept what is true.”

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? And treats it as if it doesn’t matter.

Sometimes we do not want to pay attention to what God has told us, because we fear then our dark deeds will be exposed to the light. I have news for you. Nothing will stay hidden. We will all be like the Samaritan woman at the well from last week’s Gospel reading who had the most embarrassing sins of her life announced by Jesus Himself.

When the light of God’s truth shines down on our lives and exposes our most embarrassing sins and tells that we are wrong, 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. When we come in proximity to God and His Word, real and lasting change happens. Your sins have been washed away in the waters of Baptism. Real and lasting change happened. 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 can get up out of bed knowing that real and lasting change has happened in our lives. With the light of Christ shining forth, 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, “Oh God, I wish You hadn’t seen me do that.” But we should rejoice that God exposes our sins, because He forgives them, and He does not remember them against you. Because your sin has been washed away in the daily, continual renewal of your Baptism, 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 year, and throughout the rest of your lives.

We don’t make excuses for the shameful things we have done in our past. We repent of our sin, we confess our sin, and we are forgiven our sin – because we believe and are baptized. The light of Christ shines in you. Walk as children of light. Amen.