

Sermon followed by Service

June 25, 2023

Ephesians 5:8-14

What's the darkest place in your house? I remember a room in my basement back when I was younger. It smelled, wet and grimy. No, not just grimy, I think it was more like slimy. There were bugs in there - I don't know how many, I don't know how big. And the worst part? It was dark. I remember shining the flashlight in and the light just got swallowed up by the darkness. The smell, the sliminess, the bugs - they all gave me the willies; but the darkness, that was the worst. A darkness like that molds wet concrete into slime; it breeds I don't know what; that darkness sucked the light out of the room, and if I had to go back into that darkness, it would suck the life out of me.

You know the power of darkness. At night, it makes the child feel all alone, even when mom and dad are just down the hall. It turns branches brushing against the roof into the worst kinds of monsters. Darkness depresses with a power that can shut down the body and mind. Darkness works aloneness, fear, and hopelessness. Darkness is where the devil likes to do his work.

Paul says: "**Once you were darkness.**" Not just "in the dark," not just "surrounded by darkness." Not just in the dark, made to feel alone and afraid. Not just in the dark, hopeless and helpless. To be in the dark like that can suck the life right out of us. But that's not the half of it. Paul wasn't just saying that we were "in the dark." No, Paul's saying: "we were darkness." We made people feel all alone; we made people feel helpless, hopeless, afraid. We were the breeding ground, not just for bugs, but for the evil and lovelessness that darken the world around us.

Do you remember that darkness? Do you see that darkness still brooding and churning in the corners of your heart today? It shows when our grumbling and gossip bring people down. It shows when our eyes and ears tune in to the godless on our screens and the godless in our music. It shows when our mouths lash out to bully and tear at people to get our way. That darkness shows when we see people hurt and we have no love to share, when people hurt us and we find no forgiveness to share. Those dark corners of our hearts show Paul was right: "at one time we were darkness" - a darkness that can't stand the light of God, a

darkness that can have no place in the light of heaven, a darkness deserving of death.

“But now you are light in the Lord!” Darkness and light - that’s about as opposite as you can get. We heard about darkness, what about light? What does light do? Take the person suffering from SAD - seasonal affective disorder, where the darkness of winter has people depressed and shut down in mind and body - give them the right light and they come back to to life! On gray rainy days we might get a bit grumpy, but give us some sunshine, we perk up. Give a plant the right light and it grows. Give the child afraid of the dark a light and the fear goes away. Give the millepede a shot of light and it runs scurrying away. You might know some neighborhoods where you don’t go out at night, but when daylight comes you go out safe and secure. Light makes safe and Light gives life.

And now, **“you are light!”** And it shows! It shows when you come here to church, when you sing out - you shine with the light of Jesus and brighten our day! I see you shine in the way you watch out for each other, the way you share God’s love. When you give time and treasure, when you give yourself for Christ’s work here, you shine. As you work faithfully in the job God has given you ... as you live cheerfully in the life God has given you ... you shine. As Paul says: **“You are now light in the Lord!”**

How can that be? How can we who were darkness - churning evil, breeding evil, spreading darkness ... how can we now be the opposite? How can we be light? Because you are “in the light” of Jesus Christ! When we were darkness and death, the Spirit of God came to us - in baptism, in His Word - and whispered our hearts awake, he woke us with His light: **“Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!”** From his Word, in his sacraments, Christ shines on us as the light of life!

Think about what that means. When does your life feel the darkest? It might be when you’re brought face to face with your own darkness and how it hurts the people you love. We don’t have to live in that darkness! With Jesus we get to remember another darkness, the darkness of Good Friday with Jesus on the cross. At noon darkness covered over the whole land - the darkness of our sin was transferred to Jesus and God left him in the dark to pay for the darkness of our hearts. But that darkness didn’t last. Jesus paid the price that satisfied God’s

judgment. And on Easter God brought Jesus back to life and light! Today, with Jesus the darkness of your sin is washed away! You are forgiven! Forgiven to live in the light of God!

But what if it's the darkness of the world around you that darkens you in hurt, in hopelessness? Go back to the darkness of Good Friday. Satan was working the darkness of the world against Jesus. But what did Jesus do? In spite of the darkness, **“Father, forgive them.”** In spite of the darkness, **“Today you will be with me in paradise.”** In spite of the darkness, **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”** Jesus didn't let the darkness darken him. Instead, on Easter Sunday, he proved the power of his Light. He rose to shine with the light of the Lord! Today, he shines that light for you - you have Jesus! And today, he shines that light through you - with Jesus, you are the light of the world!

So Paul says: **“Live as children of light!”** How? Paul says: **“Find out, test what pleases the Lord.”** That word “find out, test” makes me think of Colorado where we would go rock climbing. Half way up the cliff was a gold mine, at the bottom of the cliff was a stream; downstream were quiet pools where the streambed would shine like gold. At some point the miner had to test the metal - gold or fool's gold? In the same way, we need to test our lives. When we're flipping through screens - gold or fool's gold? When we're about to open our mouth, what will come out - gold or fool's gold? When we decide what to do with our Time and Treasure - how much for the Lord ... how much for us ... how much for those around us - what do we base our thinking on - gold or fool's gold? Paul says: **“Find out, test what pleases the Lord and have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness.”**

Instead live as children of light. Let Christ's light shine. And what will happen? Just as light sends the centipede scurrying, your light will help put evil back in its place. Just as light helps perk us up, Christ shining in you will brighten your world with hope and peace. Just as light helps trees to bear fruit, your light will bear fruit with goodness, rightness, and truth. And just as light gets attention, your light, Christ shining in you, will draw people to see the light of life. Once we were darkness, but now we are light in the in the world. Shine with his light. Amen.

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are surrounded by darkness - the darkness of ignorance (sometimes intentional); the darkness of worry, fear, anxiety, depression, grief; the darkness of death - all of which have their root in the darkness of sin and evil.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... our VBS children help to fill us with the light of Jesus who shines his light through our darkness so that we can live in the light of his love!

OPENING HYMN

"Blessed Jesus, at Your Word"

Hymn 919

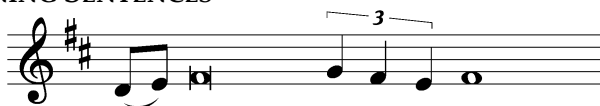
Blessèd Jesus, at your Word we are gathered all to hear you.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred now to seek and love and fear you,
by your teachings, sweet and holy, drawn from earth to love you solely.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks our night with the beams of truth unclouded.
You alone to God can win us; you must work all good within us.

Gracious Savior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God proceeding,
open now our heart and mind; help us by your Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry your Church now raises;
hear and bless our prayers and praises.

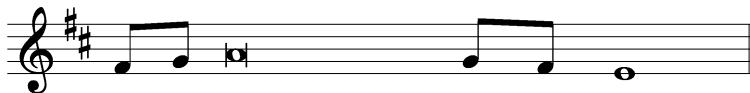
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, praise to you and adoration!
Grant that we your Word may trust, confident of our salvation,
while we here below must wander, till we sing your praises yonder.

OPENING SENTENCES



0 Lord, o - pen my lips.

The musical notation is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F#4. A slur covers the last three notes (B4, A4, G4) with a '3' above it, indicating a triplet.



And my mouth shall de - clare your praise.



Hasten to save me, O God.



O Lord, come quickly to help me.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: **Amen.**



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,



let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;



come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,



come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.



1 You are a great and a won - drous God,

2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,



cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.

kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.



You made the hills and the moun - tains high,

You are the God whom we call our own,



you made the seas and the dry land.

we are the flock that you shep - herd.

CHILDREN SING

“Shine His Light”

*Let’s slide to the left. Yeah, yeah! Let’s slide to the right. Yeah, yeah!
Show me your heart. Yeah, yeah! Now let’s shine Jesus’ light. Yeah, yeah!*

*Shine his light, Shine his light, Shine his light. For all the world to see.
Every single day is another chance. Shine, shine Jesus’ light.
Shine, shine Jesus’ light.*

*Let’s jump to the left. Yeah, yeah! Let’s jump to the right. Yeah, yeah!
Let’s do the airplane. Yeah, yeah! Now let’s shine Jesus’ light. Yeah, yeah!*

*Shine his light, Shine his light, Shine his light. For all the world to see.
Every single day is another chance. Shine, shine Jesus’ light.
Shine, shine Jesus’ light.*

*Every time you laugh, every time you smile,
Every time you shout, even when you’re quiet,
Every time you praise, you can lift it high.
Shine the light of Jesus; shine it bright. **Repeat.***

*Shine his light, Shine his light, Shine his light. For all the world to see.
Every single day is another chance. Shine, shine Jesus’ light.*

*Shine his light, Shine his light, Shine his light. For all the world to see.
Every single day is another chance. Shine, shine Jesus’ light.
Shine, shine Jesus’ light.*

“He Is the Light”

*Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Jesus is the one who lights our way.
Oh! He gives us hope for each new day.
Oh! When the world feels dark and lonely, His love illuminates.
He’s the one I trust, and I will follow him.*

*He is the light that breaks through the darkness.
Follow his lead and light it up, light it up.
Jesus will guide us through every dark time.
Follow his lead and light it up, light up the world.*

*Jesus is the one who lights our way. Oh! He gives us hope for each new day.
Oh! When the world feels dark and lonely, His love illuminates.
He's the one I trust, and I will follow him.*

*He is the light that breaks through the darkness.
Follow his lead and light it up, light it up.
Jesus will guide us through every dark time.
Follow his lead and light it up, light up the world.*

*I'm going to follow Jesus wherever he will lead me.
I'm going to follow Jesus all the way-ay.
I'm going to follow Jesus wherever he will lead me.
I'm going to follow Jesus all the way-ay.
He is the light that breaks through the darkness.
Follow his lead and light it up, light it up.
Jesus will guide us through every dark time.
Follow his lead and light it up, light up the world.
Light up the world. Light up the world.*

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalms 27C

The LORD is my light and my sal - va - tion— of
 whom shall I be a - fraid, of whom shall I be a - fraid?

Hear my voice when I / call, LORD;
 be merciful to me and / answer me.
 Do not hide your / face from me,
 do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my / helper.
 Do not reject me or for- / sake me,
 God my / Savior. *Refrain*

Though my father and mother for- / sake me,
 the LORD will re- / ceive me.
 I remain confi- / dent of this:
 I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the / living.
 Wait / for the LORD;
 be strong and take heart and wait / for the LORD.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
 and to the Holy / Spirit,
 as it was in the be- / ginning,
 is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

FIRST READING

Ephesians 5:8–14

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:14–16

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

“Speak, O Lord”

Hymn 633

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you to receive the food of your holy Word;
take your truth, plant it deep in us, shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience, holy reverence, true humility;
test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of your purity.

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.

Words of pow’r that can never fail, let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds,
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us,
truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
that will echo down through eternity.

And by grace we’ll stand on your promises,
and by faith we’ll walk as you walk with us.

Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built,
and the earth is filled with your glory.

SERMON

HYMN

“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”

Hymn 713

I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path,
and show me the way to the Father.

Refrain

I'm looking for the coming of Christ. I want to be with Jesus.
When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus.

Refrain

PRAYER

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us, that his ways may be known on earth, his salvation among all nations.

May the peoples praise you, O God. May all the peoples praise you.

Spare those who serve your people from infections and injury. Provide medical facilities to diagnose and treat disease. Give help and comfort to all the sick in every land [especially... *here name the person and the cause of the petition*]. Bring healing and health according to your will.

May the nations be glad and sing for joy.

Lord God, King of the universe, direct the governments of the world so that your people may live quiet and peaceful lives. Protect us from crime and war. Let freedom of religion flourish that the gospel may be freely preached throughout the world. Cast down rulers who oppress their people; remove governments that oppose the gospel. Bring relief to Christians who are persecuted.

For you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth.

Wherever we go, near or far, move us to share the gospel with eagerness and joy. Give us grace to be models to all so that our brothers and sisters might see our good works and glorify you. Plant in the hearts of your people a deeper desire to share the gospel with their lips and their gifts so that many more may come to know and believe the love of your Son.

The land yields its harvest, and God, our God, blesses us. May God bless us, so that all the ends of the earth will revere him. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.

The Lord grant you peace for all your days.

A - men.

CLOSING HYMN

“Shine, Jesus, Shine”

Lord, the light of your love is shining, In the midst of the darkness shining.
 Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
 Set us free by the truth you now bring us. Shine on me, shine on me.

Refrain

Shine, Jesus, shine! Fill this land with the Father's glory.
 Blaze, Spirit, blaze! Set our hearts on fire.
 Flow, river, flow! Flood the nations with grace and mercy.
 Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light!

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
 From the shadows into your radiance.
 By the blood I may enter your brightness;
 Search me, try me, consume all my darkness.
 Shine on me, shine on me.

Refrain

As we gaze on your kingly brightness, So our faces display your likeness.
 Ever changing from glory to glory,
 Mirrored here may our lives tell your story.
 Shine on me, shine on me.

Refrain

OFFERING

If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code with your mobile device.



Acknowledgements: Created by Christian Worship: Service Builder © 2023 Concordia Publishing House. Texts and music covered under OneLicense.net #A-712373 and CCLI Copyright License 11194382, CCLI Streaming License CSPL059933 Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ *New Morning Praise Opening Sentences* Tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. *Come, Oh, Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord* Text and tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. *Blessing* Text and tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. *Speak, O Lord* Text: © 2006 Thankyou Music, admin, CapitolCMGPublishing.com *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light* Text: © 1970, 1975 Celebration. *Psalm 27C* Tune: © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc. Setting: © 1993 Kermit G. Moldenhauer, admin. Northwestern Publishing House. *Shine, Jesus, Shine* Songwriters: Graham A. Kendrick Lyrics: © 1987 Make Way Music

Summer 2023 Events

WELS NIGHT AT THE BREWERS - FRIDAY, JULY 7

Join the WELS family for an evening at the ballpark to watch the Brewers take on the Reds. Group tickets can be purchased by contacting Jason Fry, Jason.Fry@brewers.com. Individual tickets can be purchased at BREWERS.COM/WELS.

ARBOR DAY - JULY 15, 9 A.M. – NOON

WELS NIGHT AT GUARANTEED RATE FIELD - FRIDAY, AUGUST 11

Join your Chicagoland WELS family on Friday, August 11, for a night of fun, fellowship, and baseball. The Chicago White Sox take on the Milwaukee Brewers starting at 7:10 p.m. Contact Rose Schanmier or Kim L’Esperance with questions. Sign-up sheets with more details are located on the bulletin boards in the Narthex and the Fellowship Hall.

ARBOR DAY - AUGUST 12, 9 A.M. – NOON

2023-2024 SCHOOL OPENING SERVICE - AUGUST 20