

+++ In the Name of Jesus +++

Title: “Walk in the Light”

Date: Sunday, March 15, 2026 (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, series A)

Text: Ephesians 5:8-14

<sup>8</sup> Once you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes evident – and everything that is evident is light. <sup>14</sup> This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’

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So, what do you think? Are we enjoying more light than we did last Sunday, or not?

It depends on our perspective, right? Objectively, yes of course there’s more daylight today than there was last Sunday. We’re a further week past the winter solstice, and another week closer to the summer solstice! So, between last Sunday and today, we’ve gained 25 minutes of daylight. (From 11 hours and 27 minutes, to 11 hours and 52 minutes.)

Mostly, though, the reason this is an interesting question for many of us is because of the shift we made last Sunday, from Standard Time to Daylight Savings Time. And *there*, a person’s *subjective* perceptions, opinions, and priorities seem to be even more important than the objective reality. Some people I know have been happy as a clam with the extra “full hour” of daylight we instantly “gained” every evening. To them, it feels like the whole day suddenly got longer. Others though have really felt the loss of the *morning* light—especially if they get up between 6 and 7 AM. Two weeks ago, it was already starting to get light at that time. Now, the move to so-called “Daylight Time” has actually plunged those early hours back into darkness.

The difference between these two perspectives, of course, is what drives the controversy I’m sure we’ve all heard about, over the government’s sudden plan to make Daylight Savings Time *permanent*. Objectively, it shouldn’t make much difference, which time we’re following *in the summer*. Whether we prefer long evenings *or* early mornings, we already get them both, all the way through the spring and summer. We start enjoying 12 hours of daylight on March 18<sup>th</sup> (this coming Wednesday). That number keeps going up until it peaks at 16 hours and 15 minutes of daylight, for a full week around the summer solstice (June 21<sup>st</sup>). And we will *still* be enjoying 12 full hours of daylight as late as September 24<sup>th</sup>.

So, again, whether we’re on Daylight Time or Standard Time in the summer, *shouldn’t* make much difference. The *problem* is the *winter*. Then, Daylight Time would definitely continue to make the *evenings* longer, while Standard Time would definitely give us brighter mornings. The problem is, we can’t have both! And in that sense, the question simply is, which of those two options is the better one—*in the winter*? As I mentioned earlier, our personal preferences vary. But there *is* some *science* that speaks to this issue. And that science seems to suggest that Standard Time is better for our bodies than Daylight Time—*in the winter*. Bright light in the morning **“is essential for keeping our brain’s internal clock synchronized with the natural day-and-night cycle,”** according to one of our local sleep-experts.<sup>1</sup> That synchronization in turn governs not only our sleeping, but also our hormones, body temperature, digestion, cardiovascular system, and cognitive function. Apparently, that clock in our brain that governs all those things, only pays attention to the light that it gets—or doesn’t get—early in the morning.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Michael Pollock, Camosun College psychology instructor. Victoria Times-Colonist, March 4, 2026.

I don't know how much of that "brain science" Sir Sandford Fleming was aware of, when he proposed the worldwide system of Standard Time back in 1878. His goal was helping the railroads coordinate their schedules—not keeping our brains and bodies "on track." But the system he came up with—having the sun directly overhead at noon, in the (east-west) centre of every time-zone, all around the world—was (and is) the best for our bodies.

As you can tell, I'm very interested in this question. And, like many of you, I have a definite opinion about it, *as a citizen*. BUT: what really got me going on this topic, this week, was not just this current *social* controversy here in British Columbia, but the *spiritual* controversy St. Paul was talking about in our reading from Ephesians. As you may have noticed, Paul uses the same kinds of tensions and trade-offs between light and darkness that we are interested in right now in physical terms, to talk about what is good, *and* not-so-good, in our spiritual life.

There, it's even easier to understand what is *better* for our health and wellbeing, and what is *worse*. The "**deeds of darkness**," Paul says, are "**fruitless**"! (Eph 5:11) "**Fruit**," in the Bible, is a metaphor for all the good things God produces in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit—things like "**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**." (Gal 5:22-23) The "**deeds of darkness**" produce *none* of those good fruits: instead (Paul says), what "**darkness**" produces are "**shameful**" things, which done "**in secret**" by people who are "**disobedient**." (v.12) All of those words, in the Bible, are totally negative. That makes it pretty clear that Paul would *never* concede that "**darkness**" is an acceptable personal preference. In physical terms, "fine!"—I don't think Paul would have cared very much at all, *as a Christian*, about *whichever* time-zone all of us decide, collectively, to align ourselves with. But spiritually? There, darkness and light are absolutely critical matters for every single one of us to think through. There is a heavy and permanent price to be paid by anyone who purposely chooses darkness over light.

Light, you see, always lines up with God. Light was the very first thing God ever created (in the book of Genesis) (Gen 1:2). Spiritually, too—as the Psalmist so insightfully said, "**In your light [O Lord], we see light!**" (Ps 36:9) So, here in today's reading, Paul describes our *previous* way of life (before we became Christians) as having been "**darkness**." (v.8) "**But now**," Paul says, "**you are light in the Lord!**" (v.8) The contrast between those two totally different ways of being is emphasized by the contrast between "**once**" and "**now**." It's like what we all experienced at 2 AM last Sunday, in physical terms (or whenever it was that we actually happened to change our clocks). One moment, it was *one* time—a second later, we had made a significant step forward!

And clearly, Paul wants *this* change to be permanent. "**Now that we are light in the Lord**," he urges us to "**live as children of light**." (v.8) Don't "*fall back*" anymore, Paul says, to those "**fruitless deeds of darkness—but rather expose them!**" (v.11) Illuminate them! Shine a light on them! *Notice* how misguided, and misleading, and miserable those deeds of darkness are... and impress that vision in your mind, so you *won't* "fall back" into any of that darkness anymore. *Instead*, Paul says, "it's time" for all of us to embrace this brand-new world of "spiritual *sunshine*" that God has always intended his people to enjoy. "**The fruit of the light**," Paul says, "**is goodness, righteousness, and truth**." (v.9) *Those* are the virtues, blessings, and pleasures that God *wants* us to experience and enjoy, "24/7/365."

As the One who designed us in the first place, the Lord knows that *those* are the conditions we all really need to be "exposed to," in order to *thrive*. Of course we can "live in the darkness *for a while*," when we *have to*. The same way you and I go through longer and shorter periods of physical darkness in the course of the year, we all dip in and out of *spiritual* darkness too, as *sin* descends onto us more "darkly" in some seasons of our lives than others. But we are

not helpless *victims* of this dynamic, Paul says. It is not *inevitable* that we should have to “peer” our way through Arctic darkness, permanently! Instead, Paul says, “**Find out what pleases the Lord!**” (v. 10) Do your research! Listen to the experts! Make your decisions, not only on major life issues but even on smaller matters too, based on what is *objectively* best for the kind of creatures God has made us to be.

Lent is an excellent season of the church-year for us to “figure this out” in. From one angle, all of the “light” in Lent shines on Jesus, “illuminating” the way *he* walked along *his* road, leading *him* to the darkness of *his* cross. The season of Lent began with his Temptation—at the very beginning of his ministry, which we remembered on the First Sunday in Lent, February 22<sup>nd</sup>. The end of Lent arrives in Holy Week—first, as we observe Palm Sunday (two weeks from today, March 29<sup>th</sup>) and then as we follow our Saviour down into the depths of death and the grave (on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday). In between, each of these Sundays *in* the season of Lent shows us segments of Jesus’s ministry—each of them “revealing” a little bit more of the teaching, preaching, and miracles he performed, to *show us* the light of God’s grace.

Maybe you noticed, in this regard, how important *light* is in today’s Gospel reading. As soon as Jesus gave *physical* sight to that man who had been born blind—that man suddenly, instantly, and permanently gained the ability to *also see* the radiance of God’s kingdom, in ways he had never perceived it before.” “**Once, he was darkness—but now, he was light in the Lord!**” (Eph 5:8) And at the same time, the religious leaders—whose physical eyes apparently worked just fine—were sinking deeper and deeper into *spiritual* darkness, as they *lost* their ability to perceive, and register, and respond to, *Jesus* as “**the light of the world.**” (John 9:5)

For all those people there in John chapter 9, light and darkness were not just theoretical, but immediately and obviously *real*, in ways that had powerful effects on their daily pattern of life! The man who had *once* been physically blind, gained the spiritual sight to “**believe**” in Jesus his Saviour—and, toward the end of that chapter, to “**worship him.**” (v.38) At the other end of that spectrum, the religious leaders became so “**blind**” in their spiritual darkness that they “**threw that blind man out**”—and had to face Christ’s “**judgement.**” (vv.34, 39)

Light is not just a theory for you and me either. As St. Paul says, we *are* “**light in the Lord.**” We don’t have to turn ourselves *into* light, we just have to “**live as children of light**”—*being* what we *are!* (Eph 5:8) That’s what Jesus was telling us a few weeks ago too, when he called us “**the light of the world, a city that cannot be hidden.**” (Matt 5:14) Right after reminding us that that is who we *are*, he immediately went on to tell us to “**let our light shine before people, so they may see our good works and praise our Father in heaven.**” (Matt 5:16) So, both individually and together, you and I both can and should *let* this light that Christ has made us to be, *shine* into all the dark corners that surround us. Just as Jesus our Saviour has already illuminated *us*, we too can and should help to illuminate *others*.

Part of that—as Paul says—involves “**exposing the deeds of darkness.**” (v.11) We don’t have to look very far at all to *discover* that darkness these days—whether we’re talking about corruption, dishonesty, immorality, or whatever. You and I *should* “call such things out,” wherever and whenever we see them! But just as importantly, we *also* ought to “let the light of *Christ* shine”—*in* us, and *through* us, as we “**live as children of light.**” (v.8)

It’s always a matter, you see, of paying good attention to *both* sides of the situation we find ourselves in. Even as we allow the light of God’s law to “**expose**” and condemn our sin, we also *welcome* (even more!) the “**light**” that the Gospel shines onto Jesus our Saviour! (v.11) Even as we “**have nothing to do with**” the “**fruitless deeds of darkness,**” we also *nourish* and *encourage* “**the fruit of the light.**” (v.9) Law *and* Gospel—you see?—judgement *and* forgiveness; the *old* self we continue to be (*even* as Christians), and the *new* self we delight in (*only* as Christians). All of these contrasts are things we need to think through, learn about, and

grow into, as the Holy Spirit “shines” more and more of “the light of Christ” into the darkness of our lives.

Yes, that *physical* light we all enjoy so much, *is* increasing! There’s *noticeably* more daylight now than we had a week ago. And regardless what you and I think about *that*—whether we favour year-round Standard Time, or Daylight Time, or even seasonal shifts back-and-forth—we can *all* agree and be *thankful* that there is *less* physical darkness *every day* at this time of the year.

Spiritually too, may the light of Christ *always* continue to *increase*—for each of us, and for all of us. As St. Paul says in the very last verse of this reading, **“Wake, O sleeper—rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!”** (v.14)

May it be so, *every day*. In the name of Jesus, dear friends. AMEN!