

Sunday, March 15, 2026

## **Fourth Sunday in Lent A**

Ephesians 5:8-14

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

*"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:14b)*

My friends,

How many of you love your alarm clock?

I am **not** a morning person.

Normally, when my alarm goes off,

I am not thinking, "O goody!"

However,

there are times when an alarm  
or an early wake-up is welcome.

Do you remember being a little kid?

Getting up for school was awful.

But getting up early for Saturday morning cartoons?

Not nearly so difficult.

Waking up early for a fishing trip?

Or for that bucket-list vacation?

Not at all like getting up for work.

When I was little,

I had terrible nightmares.

I remember one night,  
lying terrified in the darkness.

But after a while, birds started to sing.

Light came in through the windows.

Night was over, and day had come.

What a relief!

Christ's voice, "Wake up, sleepy head!"  
 is **not** the blaring 5:00 AM alarm  
 getting you ready for a nasty commute.  
 It is an invitation to live.  
 It is light breaking the terror of darkness.  
 It is rescue from the nightmare of death.  
 His voice is resurrection into joyful life.

*"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!"*

### I.

*"For at one time you were darkness,  
 but now you are light in the Lord.  
 Walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8)*

My friends,  
 What does it mean to live in darkness?  
 What does it mean to **be** darkness?

St. Paul doesn't merely tell the Ephesians  
 that they were **in** the dark.  
 He says,  
*"At one time you **were** darkness."*  
 Darkness was their identity.  
 Their definition.  
 Who they were.  
 Their "authentic selves."  
 Darkness.

But **NOT** anymore.  
 Now they are *children of light*.

In Scripture, darkness is the language of sin and death.  
 Of being lost.  
 Without hope.  
 Enslaved by the devil.

Sin and death are inseparable companions.

Earlier in Ephesians, St. Paul wrote:

*"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins  
in which you once walked,  
following the course of this world,  
following the prince of the power of the air,  
the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—  
among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh,  
carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind,  
and were by nature children of wrath...."* (Ephesians 2:1–3a).

Death and darkness are

*carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind.*

It is the Old Adam.

The sinful nature.

In the verses before our Epistle reading,  
this death and darkness are described.

*sexual immorality  
any kind of immorality and impurity  
greed  
obscenity,  
foolish talk,  
coarse joking  
and idolatry.*

*"Let no one deceive you  
with empty words,  
for because of these things  
the wrath of God comes  
upon the sons of disobedience.  
Therefore  
do not become partners with them."* (Ephesians 5:6–7)

Galatians chapter five echoes:

*"Now the works of the flesh are evident:  
sexual immorality,  
impurity,  
sensuality,  
idolatry,  
sorcery,  
hostility,  
strife,  
jealousy,  
fits of anger,  
rivalries,  
dissensions,  
divisions,  
envy,  
drunkenness,  
wild partying,  
and things like these.  
I warn you, as I warned you before,  
that those who do such things  
will **not** inherit the kingdom of God."* (Galatians 5:19–21).

All of those things

are the nightmare Christ has wakened you from.  
That is the death  
Christ has raised you **out** of.  
But Satan, the world, and your sinful nature  
wish to lull you back into sleep.

These are the desires and works of our sinful nature.

Drifting into them is not hard at all.  
All you have to do is follow your heart.  
Then we fear and desire things more than God.  
We become jealous and envious.  
We struggle for power.  
We push our own agendas.  
We stir up dissensions and divisions.

The drift into darkness is subtle and easy for every one of us.  
 The problem is not simple laziness or drowsiness.  
 The problem is death.  
 The death we carry in our Old Adam,  
 the old sinner within us.  
 That sinner must be drowned every day  
 through repentance.  
 We never lose our need  
 for Christ's resurrecting Word.

This call to "*rise from the dead*" isn't a call to try harder.  
 No one simply rises from the dead  
 because **they** decided to add a little life.  
 Life comes from outside of us.  
 Life comes from Jesus.

## II.

*"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,  
 and Christ will shine on you!"*

My friends,  
 Life comes from an interruption.  
 A shout that disrupts death.  
*"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,  
 and Christ will shine on you!"*

The light **is** Christ.  
 His voice wakes you from death.  
 And His light shines on you.  
 His light makes you light and no longer darkness.

*"Awake, O sleeper!"*  
 God's Word does what it says.  
 2 Corinthians chapter four  
 rephrases this in the creation language of Genesis.

"For God, who said, '  
*Let light shine out of darkness, ' shone His light in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 4:6.)  
 God's creating Word raises us from sin and death unto the life of faith.  
 God's creating Word raises us into the Gospel's light.  
 God's creating Word renames us *Children of light.*

The call to wake up is **not** a scolding.  
 It is **not** an exhortation to moral improvement.  
 It **is** divine interruption!  
 It **is** the voice of creation, making life spring from death.  
 God makes wakefulness spring from sleep.  
 "*Let there be light!*" and *there was light!*"  
 "*Awake!*" and you are awake.

"Awake!" is not mere encouragement.  
 It is resurrection!

And we **are** raised, because **Christ** is raised.  
**We** awake because **Christ** is awake.

Jesus entered the deepest sleep.  
 Jesus entered death itself for us.  
 He experienced darkness at noon.  
 He who had no sin became sin for us.  
 He shouted,  
 "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*"

Jesus experienced real death.

He was buried for us in the ground.

For three dark days,  
hidden from the sunlight.

He was asleep and blind for us.

*"Who is blind but my servant,  
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?  
Who is blind as my dedicated one,  
or blind as the servant of the Lord?"* (Isaiah 42:19)

But on the third day, God spoke.

He spoke the "Awake!"  
that raised Jesus from death.

By Holy Baptism, you are united to Jesus.

United to His death and burial.

United to His resurrection.

United to His life lived in God.

*"Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you!"*

Awake!

Because your Lord has been awakened!

Rise!

Because Christ has risen!

Awake!

Because Christ will shine on you!

And Christ's shining is the light  
of healing and life!

You **were** asleep in death.

But because Christ is risen,

**now** you awaken!

You **were** darkness.

But because Christ shines,

you **are** a child of light!

## III.

My friends,  
Believing in Jesus, you are awake!  
You are a child of light!

Christ's Word has made you new.  
You are reformed in the light of life.

In the Gospel reading,  
Jesus heals a man who was born blind.  
A man who only saw darkness.  
Jesus spits & makes mud from the *ground*.  
He places it on the man's eyes.

What did God do when He created the first man?  
He took the dust of the *ground*.  
And with His own hands  
God formed the man.

Here,  
those **same** hands  
are taking  
the dust of the ground again.  
They touch a blind man's eyes.  
Jesus refashions and reforms  
the eyes  
that never formed properly in the womb.  
Jesus creates the man's eyes anew.  
The man washes in the pool of Siloam.  
*"And He comes back seeing."  
"Though I was blind, now I see."*

And Jesus says the most beautiful thing to Him.  
Listen to this exchange.  
*"Jesus...said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*

*He answered,*

*"And who is He, sir,  
that I may believe in Him?"  
Jesus said to him, "You have **seen** Him,  
and it is He who is speaking to you."  
[the man] said, "Lord, I believe,"  
and he worshipped Him." (John 9:35–38)*

Jesus resurrected his eyes.

His eyes were **awake** to the light.  
And with those eyes,  
he saw  
*"the glory of God  
in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6).*  
He believed.  
And he worshipped Jesus.

Isaiah's words are fulfilled:

*"And I will lead the blind...  
I will turn the darkness before them into light,  
the rough places into level ground.  
These are the things I do,  
and I do not forsake them."  
"Hear, you deaf,  
and look, you blind,  
that you may **see!**" (Isaiah 42:16 & 18)*

You, too, are made new in Christ.

You were a child of darkness.  
A child of wrath.  
But now you are a child of light.  
A child of God.

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation.  
The old has passed away;  
behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17.)*

In Baptism, you have been washed.  
 And you have come back seeing.  
 In Christ, you have a new nature.  
 A nature that delights in God and turns from sin.  
 A nature that walks as a child of the light.

Jesus once said that people fear stepping into the light.  
 They are afraid of their wickedness being exposed.  
 But when we enter the light,  
 we are **forgiven**.  
 The blood of Jesus cleanses us  
 from every sin.  
 And we who once were darkness  
 are made visible.

And  
*"anything that becomes visible is light.*  
*Therefore, it says,*  
*"Awake, O sleeper,*  
*and arise from the dead,*  
*and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:14).*

\*

My friends,  
 Every Sunday is a mini-Easter.  
 Even the Sundays in Lent.

Lent is about repentance.  
 And when we repent,  
 we step into the light.  
 We step into forgiveness.  
 We step into the newness of light  
 in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Awake and arise from the dead,  
 because Christ is risen.  
 Awake and arise,  
 for Christ shines on you!

Therefore,  
 for this sermon on the fourth Sunday in Lent,  
 I will conclude with an Easter hymn.

"Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
 Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;  
 Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:  
 Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
 Jesus' touch can call us back to life again,  
 Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
 Love is come again like wheat that springeth green."

If you have been slipping back into sleep,  
*"Awake, O sleeper,  
 and arise from the dead,  
 and Christ will shine on you."* (Ephesians 5:14)

That's no alarm you want to hit 'snooze' on.  
 'Hearts that are wintry, or grieving, or in pain,  
 Jesus' touch calls back to life again.'  
 Awake,  
 and see  
*the light of the glory of God  
 in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus  
 our Lord, amen.*