

15th March 2026 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Ephesians 5:8-14

LIT UP!

What would you say is the human invention or development which has most changed our lives? Perhaps it is the wheel, or the internal combustion engine, electricity, or the internet? Maybe you think that the best thing since sliced bread is, well, nothing, so you will stick with sliced bread as the great changer of our human life. If you had to pick one thing as being a key changer for how we now live our lives as people, what would it be? I have to admit that one I would not have thought of previously, but which has come to me in relation to our theme for today, is, light; our ability to create it, to move it, store it, to use it. This started back with people making small fires that they could not only cook on and warm themselves from, but also which would have given them some light to enable them to work at night. From there, we developed various types of torches, with the discovery of how oil can be used for burning also leading on to lamps and lanterns. The development continued up to electricity, batteries, etc, so that now our ability to see and therefore do things is no longer limited by the rising and setting of the sun, or whether we are inside or outside. Maybe it's not the most influential invention ever, but our ability to create and control light at will is something that has changed our lives in ways that we don't even think about, except when we lose power for an extended period of time and then we are reminded of how much we rely on it. Light changes our lives.

Light changes our lives. A few weeks ago we also had a theme based around light, which isn't surprising because the theme of light and darkness is such a strong one in the Bible, just like it is in so many parts of our own lives. Darkness is associated with judgement and being separated from God; one of the plagues of Egypt was to send the land into darkness, and the Passover itself happened at night. When Jesus died on the cross, even though it was 3 o'clock in the afternoon darkness covered

the land. Poor darkness, there is a lot of good which can come in it also, but when it comes to the Bible and our own culture, art, movies, etc, it gets a pretty rough run.

A guy called Saul, who became the apostle Paul, also experienced firsthand how light changes our lives. As a fanatical Jew who was trying to wipe out this new Christian religion, going from town to town with a band of Roman soldiers to find any Christians and have them arrested and executed, Saul was one day blinded by a bright light and thrown from his horse as God came and spoke to him in that light. Saul was blinded for three days, in darkness, before his sight was restored and he was completely changed. He went from being Saul the great persecutor of Christians, to Paul who became one of the great Christian missionaries of all time, writing many parts of the New Testament, including our reading for today. The great turn around of Paul's life and his faith shows us that God's light changes our lives.

When Paul then talks about darkness and light in connection to our relationship with God, he knows what he is talking about. Up until he became a Christian, he had spent his life trying to do what he could to please God, to follow all of God's laws, to even see squashing this new Christian group as a way he could earn God's love and favour. But Paul came to see, and this is why he writes about it so well in his letters, that the starting point in our relationship with God isn't about what we do for Him, but about what God does for us! It is God who makes His light shine on us, God who gives us His forgiveness, God who calls us into the new life lived in His light. The hope we have is given to us, not earned. The forgiveness we are called to share is a passing on of the forgiveness we receive.

For us, this light is not just something we receive, but it is something we are. We are not just *in* the light, we are people *of the light*. It is our identity. It changes us. For us as Christians one place where we really identify this change happening for us is in our Baptism. Here, in being joined to Jesus' death and His rising again, we are brought into the light of God's love for the world; the light we now live in, the light which shines through us. Each time we celebrate a baptism in our congregation we give the newly baptised person a candle, which we say is 'a reminder of God's love

in your life’, and ‘to remind you that God’s love shines through you’. Being baptised into God’s family means not just to live in His light, but to be His light, with all this means both for us and for how we show His love to others. God’s light changes our lives.

How does that look then? How does it feel? Even, how does it sound? When we, ‘are people of the light because you belong to the Lord’ (8b), how do we then act in a way to make our light shine? What does difference does this make to our relationship with God, where we put our priorities, what we base our values on? Do we always reflect God’s light perfectly, or do people sometimes see the darkness coming through instead? In our relationship with God, are there areas in which we could shine this light a little stronger?

And how about in our relationships with other people. In how we view people, react to people, treat people, what is the difference in how we do these things as ‘people of the light’ compared to those who still live in darkness? A big part of it, we know, is that we are called to love as we are loved, to forgive as we are forgiven, to show to others the same generosity, acceptance, tolerance, understanding, as God shows to us. We know too that this comes not just from the actions and words which come out of us, but also from the thoughts and feelings which begin inside. So, again, how do we go with that? Do we always go first with the reaction and action of someone who is a person of the light, or does the darkness sometimes take over so that those things of God’s light are not what shines through us? It is a very human thing to do, isn’t it, to let the darkness overtake the light, because as much as we know we are God’s people the ‘dark side’ is still always there pushing its way through.

But here’s where the good news comes in: Even when we are struggling to show that we are people of the light, God’s light still shines in and through us. And that’s because the light we shine comes not from us, but from Him. We can be like a solar light which some of us may have in our gardens. The power for this light comes from the sun, which the light then stores up so it can shine it out in the darkness. The light does not power itself. In a simple way, that’s how it works in the light we shine out for God; it’s not charged by our own power, but by the power we get from Him.

Again, in the first place this comes from when we are joined to Him in our baptism, with the life changing light coming into our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues to ‘power us up’ through the messages of love and words of guidance we receive in God’s Word, the Bible, and the forgiveness and hope which come to us in Holy Communion. In all of these things we are ‘lit up’ in knowing God’s love, God’s light, in our lives; a light we don’t just walk in but which again defines who we are. When we fail in living as God’s light, which we know we will and do, He still continues to shine on us, powering us, so we can be Lit Up! for Him. And, in many ways, it is knowing that hope and peace which defines what it means to live as people of the light.

Being Lit Up! by God’s love for us in Jesus, and called and powered by the Holy Spirit to live this out in our lives, is what it means to be God’s people of light. Light is lifechanging, and God’s light changes our lives both now and in the life to come. As we live in the light of God’s love, we know the love and the forgiveness He offers us all, and how this changes our lives. May God’s love shine in us so we can know and experience a full relationship with Him each day, and may it also shine through us so that as we are powered by Him others can come to know this love too. Amen.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

- What would you say is the human invention or development which has most changed our lives? Why?
- What difference do you think the ability to control and use light in the way we do has changed our lives?
- Paul tells us in our reading that we are now ‘people of the light’. What does this mean for us in our relationship with God? How does it change and influence our values, priorities, etc? In regards to your relationship with God, do you always live as someone who is in His light? Bring to God any aspects of this which you struggle with, asking for His strength and help to live as who you are.
- What does being ‘people of the light’ mean for our relationships with other people? What does it change in how we react and act towards them, our feelings about them, etc? In regards to your relationship with others, do you always live as someone who is in God’s light? Bring to God any aspects of this which you struggle with, asking for His strength and help to live as who you are.

Pray: thank God for making us people of the light, so that we are Lit Up! in both knowing and sharing His love. Ask Him to help us to both live out and share this light and life each day.

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