

**WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT**  
**Sermon for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, 2026**  
**Ephesians 5:8-14**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is taken from Ephesians 5:8-14, our second reading.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

When Jesus was standing before Pilate shortly before His crucifixion, Pilate smirked, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). Why?

Jesus told Pilate that He had come to “*bear witness to the truth,*” saying that “*everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice*” (John 18:37). There is only one truth, one reality, which is the truth found in Jesus Christ. As the eternal Word, He created everything we see *as real*. As the One sent from the Father, He came to restore God’s truth about love and salvation for all. As the Way, the Truth, and the Life<sup>1</sup>, He came to bring us into God’s kingdom and to send His Spirit of Truth to guide us along His path. And again, we learn this truth and become part of Jesus’ kingdom *by listening to Him*. Pilate’s dismissive, sceptical response is what unbelievers—atheists, agnostics, philosophers, sceptics—have asked throughout history, and it remains alive today. We live in a world of secular opinion, meaning that truth is shaped in the *hearts of individuals*. This results in many perspectives on life, with no shared foundation. How can society function when truth depends on personal opinion? What is truth when it can differ from person to person? When there can be more than one truth, how can there be unity?

Today, Paul demonstrates that Christian teaching upholds *objective truth* when he encourages his listeners about their way of life. He explains they were once like Pilate, a people living in darkness, outside faith in Christ. Now, however, having heard God’s Word and being baptised into Christ, he calls them “**light in the Lord**” and urges them to “**walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true)**.” Paul teaches that once someone comes to faith in Christ, they not only know what is true but also what is right and good. Today, let’s explore our text more deeply, focusing especially on these three core virtues, and see how they define what it means to walk as children of light.

To “**walk as children of light**” means, first, that we should walk in a way consistent with all that is *good*. Paul writes, “**Walk as children of light<sup>2</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good...)**” God alone is good. He is the source and originator of good, that is, of all *moral excellence and purity*. The Scriptures clearly illuminate this. In the beginning, when God saw everything He had made, “*behold, it was very good*” (Gen. 1:12). The Hebrew word used here for “good<sup>2</sup>” refers to something which is beautiful or pleasant, which delights the eye of the beholder or the mind of one who considers it. Throughout the Old Testament, it was evident to the ancient Israelites that goodness is a gift and blessing from God. Psalm 73 acknowledges that “*it is good to be near God*” (v 28), and Psalm 109 affirms that God’s “*steadfast love is good*” (v 21). In the New Testament, Jesus explicitly states, “*No one is good except God alone*” (Mark 10:18). During that moment, Jesus was guiding the rich young

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:6

<sup>2</sup> טוב “tov”

man away from relying on his own good deeds to recognising the works of God. As Jesus is God, He was pointing the rich young man to focus on Him.

Though God alone is good, Paul teaches the Ephesians that, by baptism and faith in Christ, they have been brought out of spiritual blindness and can now see what “good” is! Before they knew Christ, the Ephesians *did not know*. Formerly, they were lost, and their lives were lived in pursuit of carnal things. Formerly, they were spiritually in the dark regarding God’s will for them. Paul reminded them, using a figure of speech called a metaphor, how “**one time you were darkness.**” With these words, Paul goes a step further. Not only were the Ephesians misled and under the influence of wicked paganism, *but they themselves were also a bad influence*. **They** were the darkness that misled others to practice and even enjoy gross immorality and wickedness. Paul writes in the 1st chapter of Romans about how low such people had fallen, mentioning that they had been worshipping idols and even engaging in unnatural relations.<sup>3</sup> This behaviour before Christ was not good.

Then the prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself brought to the world “news” from this “good God” that came to be called “Good News!” That news was of the only true God, who forgives and saves through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of Christ’s suffering and death for the sins of the world, disobedient sinners were able to go from unbelief to belief, from darkness to light, from bad to good.

Pilate, standing near and talking to Jesus, was an unbeliever living in darkness who scoffed at the idea of Christian virtue. His decisions were not based on virtue but on *expediency*. Look at the world around us today. Who is seeking what is morally excellent? Who is seeking what is objectively good? The basis for much decision-making in popular culture is subjective; that means, it comes from within the human heart. “Whatever seems good to me, I shall do!” says modern man. It seems silly to the unbeliever to seek what is good from outside of self, because an upstanding moral life based on an objective ethic does not necessarily indulge the flesh or fill the bank accounts. In fact, it may do the opposite! Paul teaches that “**walking as children of light**” means seeking the good that God has taught and shown.

And not only what is good, but also that which is *right*. Paul writes, “**Walk as children of light** <sup>9</sup> **(for the fruit of light is found in all that is... right.)**”

Just as God alone is good, God alone is right. When Paul teaches the Ephesians to pursue that which is “**right**,” he is not teaching them to seek what is “correct” as much as he is teaching them to pursue justice and righteousness.

Now, when considering the rightness or righteousness of God, we immediately think of God as judge or arbiter. In fact, the Scriptures reveal God this way in many cases. Again, we appeal to the Psalms. Psalm 7 states clearly, “*God is a righteous judge*” (v 11), and Psalm 50 says, “*The heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge!*” (v 6).

A proper understanding of “righteousness” is central to understanding the entire Bible. God, who created the world, was sorrowful when His creation fell into sin. Nevertheless, God judged Adam and Eve according to their sin in the Garden of Eden, saying, ultimately, “*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return*” (Gen. 3:19). As the world now lived in a state corrupted by sin, the Creator was entirely “right” to judge and sentence the sinner harshly.

However, this Divine Judge was very quick to make declarations that were laced with grace and mercy for the sinner. In fact, already with Adam and Eve, though they were judged according to their sins, God spoke words of mercy that related to the promise of a Saviour (Gen. 3:15). Throughout the biblical

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 1

text, we learn more of the Creator God, who is Judge. His judgments are not made with hostile force and cold indifference. Rather, justice is sought not only with regard to what is right but also with regard to what is merciful. So, the Creator God shows amazing grace as the gift of His Son is announced, a Son who was given willingly for the sake of the lost sinner. As the Messiah was promised to the world, yes, already to Adam and Eve, the declaration of righteousness was made. Now, the sinner did not have to appear before the angry Judge on the basis of his own works or merits. Rather, the sinner was given an Advocate to stand next to him—even in his place as Substitute, taking the death we deserved upon Himself. That advocate was the Son of God, the Saviour, Christ Jesus.

Our God, who is Judge therefore, is not one from whom we should flee, but to whom we should run. In Isaiah, we read of this Judge making a declaration: “*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool*” (Is. 1:18). Paul makes a parallel statement in Romans when he writes, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 3:23-24). It is this “good” and “right” God who has brought sinners from darkness to light, and in so doing has called them to that which is right.

Knowing the righteous God who has acted with mercy on behalf of the sinner for the sake of the cross of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Ephesians are now given a very clear understanding of what it means to walk “**as children of light**” in all that is “right.” This “walk” will be consistent with justice and mercy, with sound judgments and compassionate decrees, with attention to the Law of God and a focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Understanding what is “right” in light of the Lord, the Ephesians are now given an ethical standard by which to live. Paul tells them in verse 10, “**Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**”

Our first thought after reading these words could give the impression that there is considerable uncertainty as to what pleases the Lord, and it is our task to discover it. Actually, the Greek verb in this phrase might better be translated “approve” or “put your stamp of approval on.” The sense of the sentence would then be: “Live as children of light and put your stamp of approval on what pleases God.” What pleases God is the fruit that light produces, namely, goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Knowledge of what is good and right will go a long way toward helping the Ephesians live out their Christian calling. But Paul speaks of one more virtue in verse 9 that will help them still more, a virtue that Pilate thought was so far from anyone, but a virtue that is close to us in Jesus Christ our Lord: that which is true. “**The fruit of light is found in all that is... true,**” Paul writes.

It’s an ironic moment in time when Pontius Pilate, a man born of Adam, looks into the eyes of the God who created him and smirks, “*What is truth?*” Jesus, of course, is Truth Incarnate. The Bible again speaks of our God as a God of truth. Appealing yet again to the Psalms, we read in Psalm 43, “*Send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me*” (v 3). In Psalm 51, “*Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart*” (v 6).

The language of truth, like goodness and righteousness, is not only found in the Old Testament but also sounds forth clearly in the New, especially as it relates to Jesus. The Apostle John writes of truth as a theme in his Gospel. Beginning already in chapter 1, he says, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (v. 14). Just a few verses later, he writes again, “*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” (v. 17). While these texts are clear, nothing is clearer than what Jesus says in John 14: “*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (14:6). The Scriptures make it clear. God alone is the source of all truth, and **if the world is to know truth, then it must know Jesus Christ, the truth of God incarnate**.

Paul says that walking “**as children of light**” must also include walking in the truth, that is, in the facts

and realities of life. How does one walk so? Jesus answers this question again in John 8, saying, “*If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (vv 31-32). Jesus clearly teaches that the Word of God is truth, fact, and real, even as He prays in the High Priestly Prayer, “*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth*” (John 17:17). The Word of God is one of the means through which the Holy Spirit works to bring people from darkness to light. It is God’s Word, which the unbelieving world received through the preaching of Paul, that led them away from that which was unfruitful, dark, and shameful. God’s Word exposed their dark ways so that they could see and live in the light of the truth.

What a struggle we face daily with debates about what is true and real! Truth has become so obscured that it makes us angry and frustrated even just thinking about it: A boy calls himself a girl. A girl calls herself a cat. An unborn child is called a “product of conception.” Standing up for your beliefs is labelled as bigotry. And it continues on. It’s become clearer that the Christian faith and worldview are under attack by what is false and dark. Today, the world lives in a way very similar to that of the Ephesians before they came into the light of Christ.

But Paul’s words in our text are for believers, including us. He is not barking at the unfaithful, but is exhorting God’s chosen, His elect in Christ. He is calling and reminding and teaching them—teaching you and me—to live out their rightful calling—our rightful calling—to “**walk as children of light**” that Christ Jesus has clearly made known to us and continues to make clear to us in Holy Scripture. The calling of which Paul spoke to the Ephesians was not based in the mind of man but in the mind and will of God, who created, redeemed, and sanctifies. He exhorts the Ephesians to consider their walk and to be wise in their day, knowing that the days are evil and that Satan will ever continue to attack those who confess Jesus as Lord.

Though virtue remains on trial today in our world and our society, and Pilate’s question continues to ring from generation to generation, we have received a word from the only reliable source of wisdom and knowledge in life. The triune God, who is Himself good and right and true, has given us His Son—even to death on the cross—so that we may have these virtues illuminated before our eyes. Not only that, but the Son of God has brought us into His marvellous light by baptism into His name, that we may not only *know* virtue but also *live* virtuous lives.

May we, like the Ephesians, boldly cling to the Word of Christ and pursue that which is good and right and true in our day, to the glory of God and in service to our neighbour. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.