

The 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
“THE Light has dawned in our darkness!”

Matthew 4:12-17

January 25, 2026

Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 4:12-17.

“12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. 13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.”

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

So far the text:

What did you or I do this morning to make the sun rise? That seems like a silly question to ask right? Because obviously, we didn’t do anything, nor can we do anything to help the sun rise. We wait...passively, not actively. We wait powerlessly for the sun to peak over the horizon and begin to give its light to our land.

And where there is light, there is also warmth! And we watch, again passively, as the temperature slowly climbs. The weathermen and women actively try to predict and warn us what the day is going to be like. And then sometimes panic ensues and there is a run on food in the grocery stores and the shelves are bare like in Dallas. Yes, that’s an active reaction, now, to the arctic blast that we are powerless to stop.

Well, our text speaks of a Great Light that has dawned...THE Great Light that has dawned upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death. What is this talking about? Well, our text doesn’t leave us in doubt.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Jesus...Jesus is the Great Light. Jesus is the Light of the World as we heard on Christmas day from John 1.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

Jesus is the Light who gives life to the world that He created holy and perfect, but had fallen into the darkness of sin...our sin. But God actively did something about it that we, who passively sat in the darkness of the shadow of death were powerless to do.

He dawned! He came to us! The Word became flesh and dwelt among us! The light of the kingdom of heaven shining brilliantly with grace and truth, broke through the darkness of the evil of this world and gave hope to all of us who sat powerlessly in the darkness of our own sin!

We've been hearing how it was confirmed to John the Baptist who this Light was. The Holy Spirit would descend upon Him in the form of a dove. And John then lost no time pointing out to his disciples – Jesus! “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Look! There He is! The Lamb who actively goes to the cross and sacrifices Himself to remove the darkness of the shadow of death!

John 1 tells this to us clearly, doesn't it?

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.”

God actively, purposely, sent John to prepare the world for the coming of THE Light! And wherever God's Word is preached of repentance and forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death and resurrection, there is light in the cold, dark, fearful hearts of sinful men.

Where Jesus shines His light of salvation in the heart of powerless men, enslaved by sin, captive in the kingdom of the devil, there is rescue and freedom and new life by the power of the same Holy Spirit who descended upon Jesus to anoint Him for His saving mission. The Holy Spirit actively creates faith through the spoken Word of God and creates children of God.

In the heart of a child of God where the Light of Jesus' love shines, there is no longer any fear! So says our Psalm for today, Psalm 27.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?”

The Lord has done this! And if the Lord is my salvation, there is nothing to fear in this life, or ever!

“Though an army may encamp against me my heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident.”

For the Kingdom of God is at hand, in my heart. Where darkness dwelt, there now dwells the tabernacle of the Triune God!

“For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.”

So high He sets me upon the Rock – Jesus Christ - that I am untouchable from all trouble, all evil of this world, the devil and death itself!

It is now wonder then that David writes in Psalm 27:

“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”

One thing...the most important thing of life...of which a Christian desires above all other things...is to hear this good news to us again and again ...of God's glorious plan of salvation through Jesus. And it is beautiful to behold! It is beautiful to hear God's Word in His temple and receive the very body and blood of Jesus who gave and shed this very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Given and shed for you! Jesus proclaims to us as He gives us His very body and blood in, with and under the bread and wine. It is beautiful for our soul to believe and behold. His light shines in our hearts and He tells us to go in peace.

As Jesus began His Galilean ministry, regions like "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles" saw and heard Jesus' message that His Kingdom of grace and mercy was at hand! It is for all people who sit in the darkness of sin.

It is for us in our Galilee of the Gentiles in the Rio Grande Valley as His Word is proclaimed hear at Immanuel. And it is beautiful for us to behold and then share with others who still sit in darkness.

God turned humble fishermen into fishers of men. And he does the same with each of us who have been caught in His net of love. Yes, you are a keeper, washed of your sins in your baptism, clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness. Now follow Me. Cast the net of God's Word with Me that others in darkness would hear and be saved. Don't ever lose heart. But hear the final words of Psalm 27:

**"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the Lord
In the land of the living.**

**14 Wait on the Lord;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the Lord!**

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)