



Celebrate

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 8, 2026

Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]

Shortly after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, the people were troubled by the ineffectiveness of their fasts. God reminds them that outward observance is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked.

Shout out; do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced
righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of
their God;

they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.

³"Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do
not notice?"

Look, you serve your own interest on
your fast day
and oppress all your workers.

⁴You fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on
high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

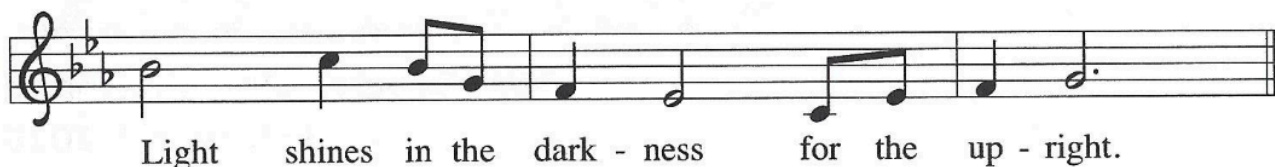
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the
hungry
and bring the homeless poor into
your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your
own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like
the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up
quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your
rear guard.

continued



Hallelujah! Happy are they who ¹ fear the LORD
and have great delight in ¹ God's commandments!

²**Their descendants will be mighty ¹ in the land;
the generation of the upright ¹ will be blessed.**

³Wealth and riches will be ¹ in their house,
and their righteousness will ¹ last forever.

⁴**Light shines in the darkness ¹ for the upright;
the righteous are merciful and full ¹ of compassion. R**

⁵It is good for them to be gener- ¹ ous in lending
and to manage their af- ¹ fairs with justice.

⁶**For they will nev- ¹ er be shaken;
the righteous will be kept in everlast- ¹ ing remembrance.**

⁷They will not be afraid of any ¹ evil rumors;
their heart is steadfast, trusting ¹ in the LORD.

⁸**Their heart is established and ¹ will not shrink,
until they see their desire up- ¹ on their enemies.**

⁹They have given freely to the poor,
and their righteousness stands ¹ fast forever;
they will hold up their ¹ head with honor. [R] *here only if psalm ends at v. 9*

[¹⁰**The wicked will see it and be angry;
they will gnash their teeth and ¹ pine away;
the desires of the wick- ¹ ed will perish.] R**

First Reading, continued

^{9a}Then you shall call, and the LORD will
answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say,
"Here I am."

[^{9b}If you remove the yoke from among
you,
the pointing of the finger, the
speaking of evil,

¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched
places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.

¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of
many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the
breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.]

Though people such as the Corinthians are enamored with human philosophy and wisdom, Paul continuously presents God's hidden wisdom which is Jesus Christ crucified. True spiritual maturity involves judging ourselves and others in light of God's revelation in the cross.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory ⁸and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who
love him”—

¹⁰God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. [¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.]

¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶“For who has known the mind of
the Lord
so as to instruct him?”
But we have the mind of Christ.]

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-20

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages his followers to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, doing good works and keeping God's commandments.

[Jesus said:] ¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

As God's beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

A brief silence.

Your church does ministry in many and various ways. Keep the baptized true to the mind of Christ, that our works and witness bring hope to a troubled world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Your marvelous creation cries out to you. Restore polluted air, soil, and water sources to wholeness. Guard honeybees, elephants, great whales and songbirds from harm, and renew the face of the earth. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Your people in every nation suffer injustice, poverty, and the threat of violence. Guide those in authority to govern with compassion, and bring peace to war zones (*areas of conflict may be named*). We pray for our enemies. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Your blessings are poured out for all in need. Help and heal any who experience trauma, discrimination, disease, hunger, abuse, or persecution. Comfort those who are sick or grieving (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Your wisdom guides this congregation and its ministries. Sustain our ordained leaders, staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. Form us to be salt and light for the neighbors we serve, following the example of Christ. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your saints rejoice at your heavenly banquet. We give thanks for their lives of faith, trusting that we also will be embraced by your eternal love. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 119:105-112. **Tuesday** 2 Corinthians 4:1-12. **Wednesday** John 8:12-30. **Thursday** Psalm 2. **Friday** Hebrews 11:23-28. **Saturday** (commemoration of Cyril, monk, died 869; Methodius, bishop, died 885; missionaries to the Slavs) Mark 9:9-13. **Transfiguration of Our Lord** Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2 or Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9.

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