

# The Light of Repentance

Matthew 4:12-25

## Introduction

*The people dwelling in darkness (Matthew 4:16)*. That is a good description of people today. Not just some people but all people. We need light. Darkness is deadly to humans. The reason Alaska has the highest suicide rate of any state in the country is that it has six months of night. We all dwell or live in a spiritual darkness of some kind. For all of us, it's the obvious moral darkness, since everyone has a fallen nature, and we all sin every day in thought, word, and deed. Some may live in the physical darkness of sickness and disease. A chronic illness can cast a dark pall over a person's life. For some, it may be a social darkness, where other people, even friends and family, do or say things that darken life, taking all the joy out of it. For some, it may be emotional or psychological darkness. For others, it may be economic darkness. Well, you get the idea, darkness can overcome us in any area of our life. We need light.

## Light in the Darkness

Finishing **verse 16**, it says: *the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned*. There is hope; there is light. One of the problems with light shining in darkness is that our eyes get used to the darkness. When a bright light shines in the darkness, it can be painful, even temporarily blinding. But after our eyes get used to the light, we can see where we are and where to go. We can walk in the light and be safe. The same is true with our spiritual darkness. No matter how painful it may be, we get used to it. And when light shines in our darkness, it hurts until we get adjusted to it. Once that happens, we can walk safely in the light.

## Jesus Is the Light

Jesus began preaching in Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, fulfilling what the prophet Isaiah had said. Jesus is the Light, as He said Himself: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (**John 8:12**). He is the answer to all our darkness. He is the Light that shines in our darkness. And things can never be too dark for Him. The darker the night, the brighter the Light shines.

## Darkness, the Result of Sin

As we said, our spiritual darkness, whether it is moral, emotional, physical, mental, social, economic, or whatever it may be, is the result of sin. When Adam and Eve yielded to the devil's temptations and brought sin into the world, it came with all its effects. Every evil, all the suffering in the world, from war to crime and injustice to natural disasters to the Corona Virus, is a result of original sin. This is why we can't fix things in this world. No matter what we do, human activity cannot fix the problems of the world because they are rooted in sin. Just taking care of the surface problems is like trying to treat a gunshot wound with a band-aid. This is why we can never climb out of our darkness. The root of the problem, sin, is what has to be addressed. Band-aids won't cut it.

## Repent—the Way Out of the Darkness

Sin must be dealt with. It cannot be ignored, tolerated, or welcomed. We cannot do anything about it ourselves. Our only hope is to repent. When the light shines in the darkness and exposes our sin, it hurts. Our first reaction is to recoil back into the darkness where we feel “safer.” When Peter was preaching on Pentecost, he told the crowd about Jesus, how they had crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead and seated Him in heaven. The people were cut to the quick and said, “*Brothers, what shall we do?*” (**Acts 2:37**). Peter’s answer was, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*” (v. 38). To repent is to face up to our sin—call it sin, not a mistake. Then we can own up to our sin—it is our sin, no one else’s fault. Be sorry for our sin—not that we got caught, but that we’ve hurt God. Confess our sin—in faith, lay it at Jesus’ feet and He will forgive us and take away our sin.

## Repentance, an Act of Faith

To repent is an act of faith. We can’t repent unless Jesus shines His light into our life, exposes our sin, and we see Him as our Savior. That is having faith in Jesus. We have no reason to repent and no one to whom we can repent until we see His light and believe in Him. As the **Catechism** says: *Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.*

## Walking in the Light

But it doesn’t end there. As John says: *If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin* (**1John 1:7**). Our life changes when the Light shines into our darkness. We read in the **Apology of the Augsburg Confession**, in the Article on Confession and Satisfaction: *We say that good fruit, good works in every kind of life, should follow repentance, that is, conversion or regeneration. Neither can there be true conversion or true contrition where the putting to death of the flesh and bearing good fruit do not follow* (**Ap XIIB 34**). Part of walking in the light is participating in Holy Communion. We are in constant need of forgiveness for sin. When we receive the body and blood of our Lord, He forgives us and strengthens our faith, so that we can continue to walk in the light, the Light of Repentance. Jesus is the **LIGHT OF REPENTANCE**.

---

*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

---