



Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Sunday, February 8, 2026
Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA

Introduction:

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.

PRELUDE

BELL

WELCOME

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

Please stand as you are able

*CALL TO WORSHIP

P: God will always guide us,

C: Satisfying our every need.

P: God makes us strong,

C: Watering us like a garden.

P: What was destroyed will be rebuilt,

C: And we will receive God's renewing Spirit.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Word who spoke life into being, the Wind stirring the waters. **Amen.**

P: Let us turn in confession to the one who knows us completely.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Mighty God, lover of justice,

C: You call us to life in community, but we have served our own interests at the expense of our neighbors. We have sown deceit where honesty was needed. We say the right words, but our hearts are far from you. Turn us to seek your face. Knit us together and give us the mind of Christ, that we may do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

P: The former things have passed away, and new things God now declares: Like a spring of water that never fails, God covers you in the righteousness of Christ, and forgives your sin in ✠ Jesus' name. May the Spirit give you strength to live for others, and bless you with the gift of peace. **Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN: "Christ Be Our Light" (ELW 715)**

Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957 Text © 1993 Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP Publications. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

**1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.**

Refrain

**Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.**

**2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.**

Refrain

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

- 3 Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Refrain

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

- 4 Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Refrain

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

- 5 Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
signs of your kingdom come.

Refrain

Christ, be our light!

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

***GREETING**

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

C: **And also with you.**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Lord God,

C: **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.**

Please be seated

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song

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.

¹ 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. ² Yet 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.⁴ You 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. ⁵ Is 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? ⁶ Is 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? ⁷ Is 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? ⁸ Then 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. ^{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, ¹⁰ if 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. ¹¹ The 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. ¹² Your 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.] Here ends the first reading.

PSALM 112:1-6 ~ Congregation reads the bold
Light shines in the darkness for the upright. (Ps. 112:4)

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

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

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

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

⁵ It is good for them to be generous in lending and to manage their affairs with justice.

⁶ For they will never be shaken; the righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance.

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-12

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.

¹ When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. ⁶ Yet 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. ⁷ But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory ⁸ and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, 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" — ¹⁰ God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For 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. ¹² Now 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. Here ends the second reading.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: (ELW pg. 216)

Alleluia, Lord, to whom shall we go?

Alleluia. You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL READING: 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. ¹⁵ People 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. ¹⁶ In 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. ¹⁸ For 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. ¹⁹ Therefore, 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. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” The word of the Lord... **Thanks be to God!**

CHILDREN'S TIME & SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: “Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service” (ELW 712)

Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901-1984 Text © 1961 Oxford University Press.

**1 Lord, whose love in humble service
 bore the weight of human need,
 who upon the cross, forsaken,
 worked your mercy's perfect deed:
 we, your servants, bring the worship
 not of voice alone, but heart;
 consecrating to your purpose
 ev'ry gift which you impart.**

- 2** **Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
by your Spirit send your power
to our world to make it whole.**
- 3** **As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness
dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to ardent service,
your abundant life to share.**
- 4** **Called by worship to your service,
forth in your dear name we go,
to the child, the youth, the aged,
love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort,
counsel, aid and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom
may your mercy know and live.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: A city is not built to be hidden, nor were we given your gifts to withhold them.
Open our hearts to embrace and share all that we are with your world in need.
God of grace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Like springs of water which never dry up, so are we when we follow your ways, O God. Give us vision to work on behalf of the world around us, that its resources may be fairly shared, and its wild lands and waters may be protected. God of grace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Sometimes what we do or say on behalf of our faith doesn't make sense to those around us. Give us your Spirit of truth and understanding, so that our words and deeds land powerfully with all those who long to know your mercy. God of grace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Be with all who suffer with health problems of body or spirit. Send us to share your presence and healing with them, that we all might be blessed in the encounter. We lift up all who need your care especially Jerry, Chris, Bruce, Jaxson, Kristy, Larry, Joan, Dennis, Lois, Brad, Dale, Doug, Gary, Shirley, Joyce, Bev, Reilly, Allison, Cadence, and Becky. God of grace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your saints persisted in your mission, even when they were not well received. Inspire us with their example and help us to persist in your kingdom's work. God of grace,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Make us light in the darkness, O God, the very answer to the prayers we offer. Give us grace to follow and faith to trust in your promises made real through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Please stand as you are able

***APOSTLES' CREED**

(ELW pg. 217)

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,**

suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
on the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

Please be seated

OFFERING

*We thank you for your gifts of time, talent, and treasure that help this
congregation, to continue our ministry together, and to make Christ known in our
communities and the world.*

OFFERING HYMN: "Let Justice Flow like Streams" (ELW 717)

Text: Jane Parker Huber, b. 1926

Text © 1984 Jane Parker Huber, admin. Westminster John Knox Press

**1 Let justice flow like streams
of sparkling water, pure,
enabling growth, refreshing life,
abundant, cleansing, sure.**

**2 Let righteousness roll on
as others' cares we heed,
an ever-flowing stream of faith
translated into deed.**

**3 So may God's plumb line, straight,
define our measure true,
and justice, right, and peace pervade
this world our whole life through.**

Please stand as you are able

***THE OFFERING PRAYER:**

P: Gracious God,

C: If we give to those in need but still oppress them, we are doing no good,
O God. Teach us your ways, so that we can know how to best serve your
beloved children. Bless these gifts we offer here today, and may they be
the first step toward serving you in ever deeper ways, for the sake of our
savior Jesus. Amen.

***LORD'S PRAYER sung (CLH 632)**

Our Father, which art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to our neighbor in need

***BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

May the Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

***SENDING HYMN: "God's Work, Our Hands" (ACS 1000)**

Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954

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- 1 God's work, our hands: working together,
building a future, repairing the world,
raising up homes, planting new gardens,
feeding the hungry and shelt'ring the cold.
Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
sharing the good news of your gospel.**

- 2 God's work, our feet: trav'ling together,
following Jesus to places unknown,
walking as friends, marching for freedom,
running the race with God's future the goal.
Bless, God, our feet as we follow your way,
sharing the good news of your gospel.**

- 3 God's work, our voice: singing together,
praising, proclaiming to all who will hear,
praying for peace, shouting for justice,
claiming God's love for the lost and the least.
Bless, God, our voice as we speak in your name,
sharing the good news of your gospel.**

- 4 God is at work in and around us:
seedlings are sprouting and bread's on the rise!
Washed and set free, humbled and honored,
gifted by grace, we respond in God's love.
Bless, God, our lives as we answer your call,
sharing the good news of your gospel.**

***DISMISSAL**

P: Go in peace and serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God!

IN OUR PRAYERS

Jerry Anderson	Chris & Bruce Carter
Jaxson Bosl	Kristy Fyhrie
Larry Sather	Joan Burquest
Dennis Rosenquist	Lois Rosenquist
Brad Sanvik-	nephew of Jewel Townsend

Rev. Bruce Miller- father of Karin Wagner
Dale Flemming – father of Laurie Ratajesak
Doug Tvedt – brother of Joan Burquest
Jerry Pogose – father of Chuck Pogose
Gary Borst – friend of the Andersons
Shirley Nesges – friend of the Thoms
Joyce Muyres – friend of the Thoms
Bev Guse-Ohlrech – friend of the Pedersons
Reilly McCormick – friend of Esther congregation
Allison Dotzler – friend of Kathy Mittag
Cadence Smith – friend of Mandy Arvidson
Becky Yttrie – friend of the Townsends
Family and Friends of: Sarah Pomeranz, David Anderson, Ron Myren, Katie Jahnke, Dave Bendix, Megan Sheen, Colleen Burquest, and Chad Way

SERVING IN FEBRUARY

Pastor: Feb 8-Pr. Dennis Preston, Feb 15-SAM Jewel Townsend, Feb 22-Pr. Greg Billberg

Organists: Marcia Guenther, Brad Lambrecht

Altar Care: Donna Pederson

Usher: Brady Arvidson & Jeremy Arvidson

Acolyte: Logan Arvidson

Lay Reader: Jim Arvidson

Communion Assistant: Christy Hart

Birthday Card Sender: Mandy Arvidson

PowerPoint: NEED VOLUNTEER

Tech: Mike Lage

THIS WEEK AT ESTHER

Sunday, February 8th – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

8:30 am – WELCA

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship led by Dr. Dennis Preston

11 am – Confirmation Pancake Brunch

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Wednesday, February 11th

6 pm – Confirmation: Mentor & Student Potluck

6 pm - Council

Thursday, February 12th

9 am – Quilting Group - bring a sack lunch

Sunday, February 15th – Transfiguration of our Lord

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship with Holy Communion led by SAM Jewel Townsend -New Member Welcome

11 am - VBS Planning Meeting

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Wednesday, February 18th

7 pm – Ash Wednesday Service

NEWS AND NOTES

We will celebrate Lois Rosenquist's 101st birthday before worship today! Happy Birthday Lois!

Sign-up sheets for 2026 Worship Tasks are on the Narthex table.

The Confirmation Class will host a Pancake Brunch after worship TODAY!

Free will offering will go to the local family who recently lost their home in a house fire.

VBS Planning Meeting will be held Sunday, February 15th following worship. VBS will be held Sunday, June 14th – Thursday, June 18th. ALL ARE WELCOME!

Church Lock-in for the Youth will be held Sunday, February 15th starting at 7 pm. Pick up Monday, February 16th at 8 am. You can also bring a friend. Please let Anna or Joan know if you are able to attend!

Join us for Ash Wednesday Service with Holy Communion on February 18th at 7 pm.

The Widows & Singles Share & Care group of Immanuel will meet on Friday, February 20 at 1:30 pm at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Parkers Prairie. The

activity this month is bingo. Anyone wanting to bring a snack item to share is welcome to do so.

World Day of Prayer will be held at church on March 6th from 7 am – 7 pm. More info to come. Any questions please ask Jewel.

Check out our new Esther Calendar on our website to keep up to date! Go to estherlutheran.com and click on “Esther Calendar.”

We believe everyone has a unique and valuable place in God’s family and we welcome all to share in the community of faith here at Esther. If you would like to become a member please contact Mandy in the church office at 218-338-2171 or secretary@estherlutheran.net or Jewel Townsend at 320-760-2503 or jewellht17@gmail.com

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