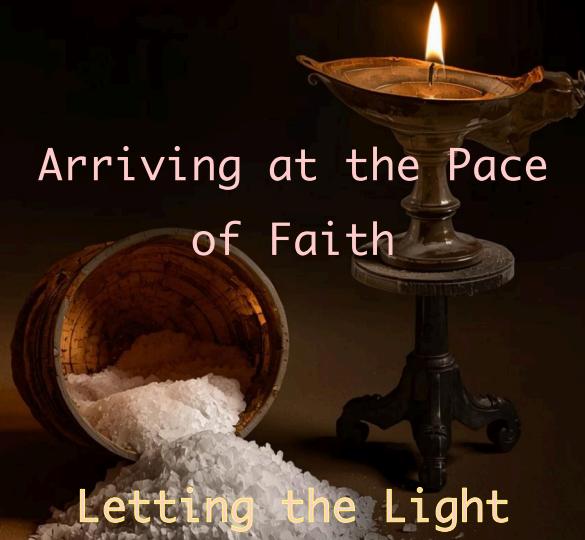




## BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study

Arriving at the Pace  
of Faith



Letting the Light  
Already Given Dawn Among Us

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany  
Isaiah 58:1-9a (9b-12)  
Psalm 112:1-9 (10)  
1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)  
Matthew 5:13-20



Made with the assistance of AI,  
including Grammarly® and ChatAtlas GTP5  
Canva – Affinity Publisher and  
Ulysses, and  
church.tech

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

**Sexagesima**

**O** Lord God,  
who seest that we put not our  
trust in any thing that we do;  
Mercifully grant that by thy power  
we may be defended against all adversity;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



## INTRODUCTION

Arriving at the Pace

of Faith

Letting the Light

Already Given Dawn Among Us

What does it truly mean to stand in God's light?

In this week's meditation, we explore how divine illumination isn't something we chase but rather a reality we're already immersed in, even before we fully comprehend it.

Drawing from Genesis, Isaiah, and the approaching seasons of Mardi Gras and Lent, he weaves together a tapestry of understanding about how God's light manifests in our daily lives.

A refreshing perspective that challenges our conventional pursuit of spiritual enlightenment – instead of striving for light, we're called to recognise where it's already breaking through in ordinary moments of faithfulness: in shared bread, opened doors, and simple acts of care.

This understanding to the rhythm of the church calendar, from the vibrant celebrations of Mardi Gras to the humble reflections of Ash Wednesday, showing how the same gifts can be received anew. The message culminates in an urgent yet gentle call to action: to take one faithful step into the light already given, whether through a compassionate phone call, sharing resources, or speaking truth in love.

This isn't about manufacturing holiness but about recognising and responding to the divine light that's already illuminating our path.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,  
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,  
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

### Arriving at the Pace of Faith

As morning breaks, first light spills through the window, casting gentle patterns on the floor. We are already standing in the light, even if we do not yet understand what we see. Scripture does not pretend otherwise. From the beginning, light is given before it is grasped. In Genesis, light is spoken while chaos still stirs. The Spirit of God hovers over the waters. God is not absent.

This week, the calendar reminds us how quickly we move. The brilliance of Transfiguration is near. Mardi Gras gathers momentum with its colour, courage, and noise. Soon, ashes will mark our foreheads with a truth we cannot avoid: we are dust, and we are loved. This is not a contradiction. It is the human condition, lived before God.

Isaiah does not ask us to chase the light or pretend it is easy. He tells us what happens when we stop hiding. Bread is shared. Doors are opened. Bodies are clothed. Kin are welcomed. Light appears in these ordinary acts, in the quiet turning toward one another.

Today, we do not strive for light. We look for where it is already breaking — in ordinary care, in lives made real, in a God who waits for us. Light emerges quietly, turning the ordinary into something holy.

Across the readings, a single thread runs through: faithful presence gives birth to light. In Isaiah 58, Psalm 112, and Matthew 5, light is not something we aim at. It breaks out where faithfulness has taken root.

In Isaiah 58, light comes after bread is shared, doors opened, bodies clothed, and family acknowledged.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.

In Psalm 112, light shines for the upright — not because they advertise it, but because they live generously and steadily.

In Matthew 5, Jesus does not say, "Try to be light." He says, you are. And therefore it cannot help but be seen.

Light is not a show.

It is not a stage.

Light is what happens when our lives turn toward God.

Isaiah and the psalmist do not speak of virtue as an idea. Righteousness is goodness you can live in. It has weight and texture. It looks like sharing, welcoming, and staying present. Paul's "hidden wisdom" in 1 Corinthians 2 is often misunderstood as something clever or esoteric. But Paul immediately disarms that reading. Wisdom is revealed, not decoded; received, not seized; known by the Spirit, not by mastery.

Wisdom, Paul says, looks like weakness. It does not hurry. It does not force. It does not turn away. It arrives. Faith, then, is not about speed. It is about recognition.

In Genesis, creation is not manufactured. It is ordered — light from darkness, chaos from life. And crucially, light exists before sun or moon. Wisdom hovers. Wisdom waits. Creation unfolds at God's pace, not ours.

How long is a day to God? A blink. A thousand years.

God releases light that waits. Light that trusts justice will be believed.

This is not a journey we invent.  
It is a journey we recognise.

Soon we will approach Mardi Gras — the last night before the dawn of Ash Wednesday. I am not saying "partying bad, church good." I am reaching for something more truthful.

There comes a moment, often at first light, when the noise no longer holds. Glitter gives way to grit. The body remembers its limits. Quieter questions rise. Who am I, now that the distractions have faded? Where do I belong?

That is not condemnation.

That is recognition.

Dawn does not mock the night.

Dawn arrives.

Isaiah 58 returns again, quietly relentless:  
Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loosen the bonds of injustice,  
to share your bread with the hungry,  
to bring the homeless poor into your house?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.

Light comes as doors open, as bread is shared, as care is given.  
Dawn arrives quietly, in these things.

During Mardi Gras, bread and wine are for celebration. On Ash Wednesday, they become communion. The same gifts, received differently. Only one invites us to stop hiding.

We do not leave the night because we are ashamed of it.  
We leave it because dawn has come.

Light was already there — hovering, waiting, patient — long before we understood what we were seeing.  
Some will notice it first on the mountain.  
Some at the table.  
Some only when the music quiets and the body remembers it is dust.

Psalm 112 calls that life is “not shaken.”  
Paul calls it wisdom that looks like weakness.  
Jesus calls it salt and light — ordinary things that quietly change everything.

So we approach Lent not by trying harder to be holy, but by taking one faithful step into the light already given.

A phone call instead of silence.  
Bread shared instead of withheld.  
A door opened instead of a life shut out.  
A hard truth spoken with love.  
A quiet act of care that no one applauds.

This is how the dawn comes —not all at once,  
but with light enough to walk by.

As we leave in peace, we carry the light that dances on the waters. We step out of the shadows and into a promise that holds. We are called to live together in the light Christ has revealed. And there we trust God’s word still stands:  
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.

God does not hurry.  
But God is not absent.  
And neither are you.

## Discussion Questions

The sermon talks about light breaking forth not as something we chase, but as something that emerges from faithful actions. What does this tell us about how spiritual growth actually happens?

Isaiah 58:8 says 'Then your light shall break forth like the dawn' after describing acts of justice and kindness, suggesting light comes as a result of faithful living rather than direct pursuit.

Think about a time when you noticed spiritual growth in your life - was it from trying to grow, or did it emerge naturally from faithful actions?

The sermon emphasises that 'we are dust, and we are loved' is not a contradiction but the human condition. How does understanding both our limitations and God's love shape how we approach our faith journey?

The sermon connects this dual reality to Ash Wednesday, where ashes mark us with this truth about our nature while affirming God's love for us.

In what areas of your life do you struggle to balance accepting your human limitations while also embracing God's infinite love for you?

How does the sermon's description of light 'breaking forth' in ordinary acts of care and kindness challenge our usual ideas about what makes something spiritually significant?

The sermon points to simple acts such as sharing bread, opening doors, clothing others, and welcoming family as moments when God's light emerges.

What 'ordinary' acts of kindness in your daily life might actually be more spiritually significant than you realise?

The sermon suggests that wisdom is 'received, not seized' and comes through weakness rather than power. Why might this be challenging for people to accept in today's culture?

Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 2 is referenced to show that wisdom is revealed through the Spirit rather than through human cleverness or strength.

When have you experienced God's wisdom or guidance through moments of weakness rather than strength?

How does the image of dawn arriving slowly, 'not all at once, but with light enough to walk by,' relate to how we should approach our spiritual growth and ministry to others?

The sermon emphasises that God does not hurry, comparing spiritual growth to the gradual illumination of morning light rather than its sudden appearance.

Where in your life might you need to slow down and trust God's timing rather than rushing for immediate spiritual results?

This five-day devotional will be taking a look beyond the shadows into the new dawn revelation from this weekend. We'll explore how light, wisdom, and faithfulness guide our lives in the presence of God, right where we are, and how we can use these insights for reflection and growth.



#### Day 1 Isaiah 58:8

This passage reminds us that light and healing emerge through simple, faithful acts of care and kindness. As we share bread with the hungry and welcome those in need, we become part of a larger divine promise. Our acts of compassion become mirrors of God's eternal light, reflecting love and justice in the world.

We begin our journey by recognising where light already exists in our lives. It's not something that needs to be forced or exaggerated; rather, it quietly breaks into our ordinary lives. As we open our hearts to these small yet profound moments, we embody the spirit of God's promise in our daily interactions.

How can I practice sharing and opening doors for others this week?

Where have I noticed light breaking into my everyday life?

What simple acts of kindness have I seen transform into light?

Pray for the courage to share your blessings with those in need.

Reflect on moments when you have felt God's light in your life and give thanks.

#### Day 2 Psalm 112:4

The scripture speaks to the radiance of those who live upright lives, not through grand gestures but through steady, humble generosity. It's in this quiet righteousness that light becomes an intrinsic part of our being, reflecting God's love and bringing hope to others around us.

Today's focus is on becoming aware of the light that shines through our consistent acts of kindness and mercy. Let us remember that



being upright in our hearts doesn't require fanfare but a continual commitment to love and serve faithfully. Like dawn, this light grows and reaches others one step at a time.

How can I cultivate steadiness in my generosity?

Do I recognise light in my persistence in doing good?

Who in my life exemplifies the light of humble righteousness?

Pray for steadfastness in your commitment to path of faith.

Ask for God's guidance to recognise and nurture the light within you.

#### Day 3 Matthew 5:14

In this passage, Jesus reassures us that we do not need to strive to become the light; we already are the light. Our everyday living in adherence to Christ's teachings naturally makes us visible beacons of hope and truth.

Reflect on how your presence and actions have the power to illuminate spaces and relationships. You are invited to embrace your identity as light, allowing your life's ordinary moments to transform into opportunities for grace and love.

Where has my presence brought light to others in unexpected ways?

How does realising I am light alter my interactions?

Which parts of my life need more light to shine through?

Pray for the courage to embrace your role as a light in the world.

Ask God to show you new ways to let your light shine brilliantly.

#### Day 4 1 Corinthians 2:7

Paul challenges us to understand wisdom not as a pursuit of intellectual prowess but as something received through vulnerability and the Spirit. True wisdom often appears as weakness to the world, yet it carries profound strength and authenticity.

Consider moments where you have felt strong in your vulnerability and how this quiet strength reflected God's wisdom. Embrace these instances as they guide you closer to understanding faith that isn't about control but about trust and acceptance.

What weaknesses have become strengths in my life?

How do I discern the Spirit's wisdom in moments of vulnerability?

When have I seen wisdom revealed in ways I didn't expect?

Ask God to help you trust in His wisdom, even when it appears as weakness.

Pray for clarity in recognising God's voice and guidance.

#### Day 5 Matthew 11:19

Christ embodies divine wisdom, which often takes unconventional forms. His life and ministry challenged societal norms by reaching out to those marginalised and inviting them into repentance and salvation. The light of Christ saw beyond the surface, into the potential and worth of every individual.

As we conclude this devotional, we are reminded to embrace a faith that celebrates joy and inclusion, finding the divine in companionship and community. Reflect on how sharing life with others in genuine ways embodies the light and wisdom of Christ.

How can I carry the light of Christ into my community today?

When have I witnessed transformation through unexpected companionship?

What barriers prevent me from embracing those different from myself?

Pray for inclusivity and open-heartedness in all interactions.

Give thanks for the community and relationships that reflect God's love.

# End notes and further reading

## End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew  
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John  
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke  
Collins, Raymond F, Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians  
Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg  
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A  
Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer (twelvebaskets.co.uk)

**Let your faith and relationships  
be shaped by love and patience  
for God's love is  
*revealed in lives, not letters.***



## Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on  
GunaiKurnai Country and  
our respects are made to  
the First Nations people  
everywhere.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

Acknowledgement of use appreciated

Subscription to "www.breaking-open-the-word.org" is available.

Also substack: substack.com/@tastigr

Published every weekend, usually on Saturday, AEST.

Biblical Quotes are from The New Revised Standard Version - Anglicised, which is © 1990 the National Churches of Christ, USA.

Study notes are prepared in conjunction and by subscription of www.church.tech, an AI open source for pastors. Content is modified for local use.

Images are either from public domain, theworshipcloud.org, original work or generate [tastigr.info](http://tastigr.info)

is registered to D. M Webster  
and all rights are reserved. © 2026

[www.breaking-open-the-word.org](http://www.breaking-open-the-word.org)  
Email: dennis-at-breakingopentheword.org