

March 15, 2026 – Isaiah 42:14-21 & Ephesians 5:8-14

Most people assume that if anyone should have it together spiritually, it would be God's own people. If anyone should see clearly, hear faithfully, and live rightly, it would be those whom the Lord Himself has chosen and called.

This assumption is extremely common outside the church. Unbelievers generally assume that if Christianity is true, then Christians should always walk the walk and live exactly according to what they believe. But even within the church, it's a common sentiment. If my faith is genuine, if I'm a child of God, then living as a child of God should be easy for me, right?

But we all know that it's not. That walking the walk is incredibly difficult. That we fail on a daily basis. And the world is constantly doubting the authenticity of our faith because of that failure.

But in that regard, things haven't changed that much over time. Because God's original chosen people, the people of Israel, had the exact same problem. Israel had the Law, the prophets, the promises, the covenant. They were the people whom God had rescued from Egypt, led through the wilderness, and brought into the Promised Land.

And yet the words of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah are harsh and convicting. *"Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send?"* The servant of the Lord is blind. The messenger of God is deaf.

The Lord isn't speaking about the pagan nations here. He's speaking about His own people. Israel, the servant whom God had chosen, had become spiritually blind. They saw God's works, but didn't recognize them. They heard His Word, but didn't listen. They possessed the Law, but didn't keep it.

*"He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear."* This is the tragedy of the servant described in our Old Testament Lesson. The one who should have known God best had become blind to Him. The one who should have listened most carefully had become deaf.

And the really uncomfortable thing to realize is that this passage isn't just about them. It's about us. For Israel was not only a nation in history. Israel was also a picture of the Church. And within each of us there remains the old Adam. That sinful nature which is just as blind and deaf as Israel ever was.

Think about how easily we become blind to God's works. The Lord provides daily bread, protects us from countless dangers, preserves our lives, and fills our days with blessings beyond number.

Yet how often do we fail to recognize it? We attribute our successes to our own efforts. We treat His gifts as though they are nothing. We forget to give thanks. We see many things, but we do not observe them.

How often are we deaf to God's Word? The Scriptures are read. The Gospel is proclaimed. The Lord speaks clearly and faithfully. Yet the old Adam within us would rather listen to any other voice. The noise of the world, the pull of our own flesh, the distractions of daily life. All of these drown out the voice of the Lord. Our ears are open, but we do not hear.

The Apostle Paul describes this condition in vivid language in our Epistle. *"For at one time you were darkness."* Not just, "you were in darkness." You were darkness. That was your nature, through and through.

That's the blindness and deafness of sin. It's not merely ignorance. It's spiritual death. It's the old Adam asleep in the darkness, unable to wake himself. And, as Paul warns the church in Ephesus, that old Adam is still within us. Still blinding us. Still deafening us. Still dragging us back into the sleep of sin and death.

Which, of course, forces us to realize something important: if we're the ones who are blind and deaf and asleep, who is there to open our eyes? To make us hear? To wake us from sleep? Because we certainly can't do it ourselves. We're the ones who are blind and deaf to our sinfulness. We're the ones being lulled to sleep by the devil, the world, and the desires of our flesh. We can't solve a problem of our own making.

The answer lies earlier in this same chapter of Isaiah. For in Isaiah 42 there is not only a tragic, sinful servant. There is also a perfect Servant. At the beginning of the chapter the Lord declares: *"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights."*

And this faithful Servant is everything the other servant is not. Where Israel was blind, the faithful Servant sees perfectly. Where Israel was deaf, the faithful Servant listens perfectly. Where Israel failed to carry out God's will, the faithful Servant fulfills it perfectly. We heard this earlier passage from Isaiah 42 about the faithful Servant just a couple months ago, during Advent. Because the faithful Servant of the Lord who was coming into the world is Jesus Christ.

He is the One who came not merely to teach the blind and the deaf but to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. Throughout His ministry this promise became visible. The blind received their sight. The deaf heard. The lame walked. Just as we heard in our Gospel Lesson today.

And these miracles were not random displays of power. They were signs. They showed physically what the Servant had come to do for the whole world spiritually. He came to heal the blindness of our heart. The deafness of our souls. He came to shout into the sleep of spiritual death, "*Awake, O sleeper. Arise from the dead.*" He came to shine the light of life on us.

Where we failed to keep God's Law, He kept it perfectly. Where we were unfaithful servants, He was the faithful Servant. Every commandment that Israel broke, every commandment that we have broken, Christ fulfilled.

Yet His mission didn't stop with perfect obedience. The faithful Servant also bore the judgment that belonged to the unfaithful ones. Later in Isaiah we hear how this perfect, faithful Servant would be "*pierced for our transgressions*" and "*crushed for our iniquities.*" The blind servant deserved punishment. The deaf servant deserved judgment. Yet the faithful Servant took that punishment upon Himself.

On the cross Christ entered into the deepest darkness of all. The Light of the world allowed Himself to be surrounded by darkness so that sinners might be brought into light. And because of His death and resurrection, something remarkable happens to us. Paul says, "*At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.*"

Once again, we don't just have light shining on us. Just as we were darkness, now, in Christ, we are people of light. The Servant who perfectly obeyed the Father now gives His light to those He has redeemed.

When the Word of Christ is preached, the Holy Spirit opens ears that could not hear before. When the Gospel announces the forgiveness of sins, eyes that were blind suddenly recognize the mercy of God. When the promise of Christ is spoken over us in Baptism and Absolution, the sleeper awakens from his slumber. All because Christ shines on us.

And, yes, that shining does change how we live. Paul exhorts us to "*walk as children of light.*" The light of Christ is not something we hide away. It shapes our lives. It exposes what is sinful so that we repent and turn away from it. It produces what Paul calls "*the fruit of light,*" which is "*found in all that is good and right and true.*"

But we don't become children of light by producing good works. We become children of light because Christ has shined upon us and filled us with his light. The fruit grows because the dead tree has already been made alive.

The old Adam within us still tries to drag us back into darkness. The blindness of sin still tempts us. The deafness of unbelief still whispers. The sleep of complacency still calls to us.

But the Servant who opened our eyes continues His work. Every time His Word is preached, He shines again. Every time the Gospel is spoken, He awakens again. Every time we receive His gifts, the light grows brighter.

And one day the work of the Servant will be complete. The blindness will be gone forever. The deafness will be gone forever. The sleep of death itself will be gone forever. For the Light of the world who rose from the grave will raise His people also.

Then we will see Him clearly. We will hear His voice perfectly. And we will live forever in the light of His presence. We will be faithful servants, just as we were created to be. Just as Christ was a faithful servant. And on that day, Christ will visibly shine on us in a day that never ends. Amen.