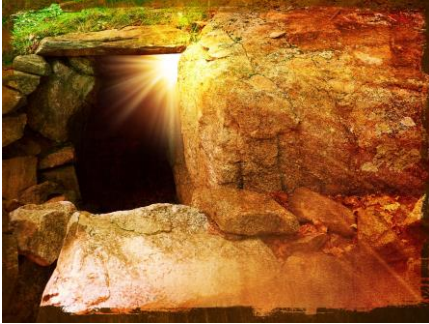


Easter Sunrise, April 5, 2015

Victory over Darkness

John 20:1-18



This is Easter, the Victory is won! Darkness defeated, the kingdom of death destroyed. The Dawn of new day has begun!

It was only a few minutes ago that the Sun overcame the darkness of the night giving life and light to a new day, today on this glorious Day. And with great rejoicing and gladness the waiting of the watchmen is fulfilled and rewarded, therefore we are so glad and thankful that we could come and join one another on this

Easter Sunrise Service, a very special moment as we hear again that Jesus is risen! He is risen from the dead!

Yes, it is a little bit early, too early for worship, or so we think, but cheer up for today we are celebrating the fact that darkness will not overcome, it hasn't overcome actually it was overcome. It is the Son, God's son whom we worship today, actually the one who comes to serve us, and so as He rises from the tomb, may we too rise with him to a new dawn! After all the glory of Christ's resurrection given to us in baptism provides comfort and hope in times of spiritual darkness for Him, the risen Christ, is our light and our life.

This is good news, the good news that the first disciples needed to hear! It is the good news that we desperate need for you and I know that darkness makes for dear life a messy venture, because it creates dangerous uncertainty. When power outages occur and we have no flashlight, trying to find our way can be hazardous—heads can bump into a wall or door frame, feet stumble over a footstool or trip on a toy left on the floor. When the fire goes out on a camping trip, one never knows what's lurking out there in the bushes, ready to pounce on unsuspecting campers.

If you were listening to the Scripture Readings, you heard the one great truth that runs through the pages of the Bible: God always come through in the darkest hour of uncertainty! Whether He was rescuing the Israelites from Pharaoh's armies or protecting the three men in the fiery furnace or ordering Abraham to hold back his knife from plunging it into Isaac, God shows himself to be a trustworthy Saviour from life's uncertainties in our darkest moments. The resurrection of Christ that we commemorate here reminds us that God's Word brings light and certainty, for three times did Jesus predict he would be raised from death. The Old Testament also offers its record of God's promised Messiah, and now that promise is a light that breaks through our uncertainty, just as the Sun this morning broke through the night and now is beginning to shine.

The resurrection of Christ broke first through the darkness of the first Disciples, and how good it was, then in the light of the risen Christ everything made sense. At first they heard and saw, but didn't make sense. The promises were there, the Word was preached, sure Jesus was the Christ, but... it didn't make much sense after he was arrested, tried, crucified and buried. It should have plain and clear to them which it was, but not in their minds. Those eleven who lived with Jesus for three years and heard him

preach should have known. They, who watched him drive out demons; restore the use of legs, ears, eyes; bring dead back to life—they should have known. They, who watched him calm storms, quiet grieving families, feed hungry crowds—they should have known that what happened on Friday could not possibly be the end of the story. And especially those three who saw him transfigured in radiant glory, who heard him say repeatedly that he would rise from the dead after being put to death—they should have known. God could not possibly let his Holy One see corruption. And true to his word, darkness did not overcome the light. Not the darkness of the disciples' doubt. Christ arose victorious over uncertainty! And now He even, with certainty, beholds your name as did Mary's on that first Easter.

What about us today? We do have our own darkness as well! At times we do face the darkness of uncertainty about your own future, especially today with the economy as it is as many are already struggling in a way that is driving them to despair. We struggle with doubt about our children's future, we do doubt the darkness of our own health situation, at times. Even the darkness that a frustrated self-cheering leaves in us can cause doubts and despair. We tell ourselves that things will eventually get better, if just, if just we do certain things, but whatever we did just left us even with a deeper frustration and disappointment. Let the light of Christ's resurrected glory dispel the darkness of those things that cause you to stumble in uncertainty and sin. Turn to your Baptism, and know that you belong to Christ and that he cares for you and that in Christ we have the medicine even for death, for Jesus Christ resurrection is our own resurrection, that is God's medicine for death. Turn to your Big brother for protection and He will cover you with his precious blood!

Darkness is also a word used to describe the world of sin and evil. Job says, "But when I hoped for good, evil came, and when I waited for light, darkness came." (Job 30:26).

And Psalm 91 speaks of "the pestilence that stalks in darkness" (Ps 91:6). We have heard legends of vampires and werewolves that locate their frightening activities at night. Children are taught to be afraid of the things that go bump in the night. And more, Satan himself is called "the prince of darkness." And Hell is described as the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So it was right for the demons to tremble, to scream in agony whenever Jesus came into their presence. For the living light was overcoming the powers of darkness in a way that foreshadowed his complete triumph over evil that his resurrection from the dead would accomplish. It was Jesus all along shining his light! And it is Jesus all along that will shine in your life as well!

In fact He has shared that light with you in Baptism already. For in Baptism, we were joined to Christ Jesus, and through that union, we receive all that's his. We now walk in his light. I can't promise that the risen Christ will heal your tumour. I can't promise that the resurrected Lord will restore your sight or hearing or mobility. I can't promise that he'll do for you any of those things he did for Palestinians of his day. For many of those miracles were done as foreshadowing of the new creation he'll restore on the Last Day. They were the early rays of the promised new day piercing the darkness caused by sin. That I can promise, after all if you are in His hands everything will go according to his plan and will!

So it's fitting that at this Easter Sunrise Service we remember our baptism, actually that we should call it our Resurrection Baptism. In the light of this day, those who haven't been baptized now would do so, for Christ has been yours all along, bringing you to be united with him and have the blessed hope of everlasting life. And for those already baptized, that we would remember that yes we have been baptized and already have been united with him through those gracious waters and now he desires that we would walk in his light. St. Paul writes, "For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8).

Know for a certainty that whatever evils threaten you, they have no more power. They live only on whatever credibility and strength you give them. Turn to Christ in confidence that the light of his resurrection has triumphed over evil. In your Baptism, you were transferred from the kingdom of darkness and made a child of the light!

Jeremiah laments, "He has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago" (Lam 3:6), and the realm of the dead is described as utter darkness. But long ago God promised through the prophet Isaiah that he would remove the shroud of death, and he has done that by raising his Son to life. And as the Father has raised his Son from the death, in him, through him, by him and for him, He will also resurrect us on the last day to the eternal light of Christ in a glorified body. Therefore what this Easter Sunrise Service reminds us is that what happened to Jesus by the working of God will one day happen to us too. You and I and all the faithful will be raised from the darkness of death to the light of eternal life. Why? As St. Paul writes, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5).

That is God's promise to you, and it's fitting for us to remember that promise by recalling our Baptism. If you grieve over the loss of loved ones in death, grieve not as those who have no hope. The darkness of the grave has been turned into only a shadow of the valley of death. The light of Christ's resurrection enlightens us with promise: "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

Because you have been buried with him by Baptism into a death like his, you will also be raised to a new life like his in resurrected glory.

So turn to the light of this Easter Sunrise Service. Let the Word that you've heard remind you of God's power and grace and strengthen you with Christ's promises. They are just as sure and certain as the sunrise that scatters this darkness and brings the new day.