

Easter Vigil  
April 3, 2021

Why are we out here in the dark in the first watch of the night? We are not here to pretend that we do not know. We know that the tomb is empty. We are here to be reminded of the reality of this age. Amidst the darkness of this age, the Light is shining. Even in what we call dark, there is light. There is always light. Even for one who is blind, there is the reality which surrounds those who do not see with their eyes. But we, who call our self seeing, do we see?

You have heard from Scripture that the Light has come into the world. We walked in here with the hope of anticipation, holding a candle with light, into this place we call the House of God. The Lord grants us hope upon hope because we see that the tomb is empty.

You fear, but why? How much fear has been unleashed in the year past? How much have we been pushed around by the world? We are all reminded, because of the empty tomb, to not fear for this life. No, we take all precautions and do what we must, but do not let the circumstances of this age determine who you are. You have been shown by this empty tomb that the end of life in this age is not the end. It will come, as it must, to us all, when and where it will come. Today is the day you have been given by the Lord. What will you do with it?

Everything has its meaning. We, in what we call the modern era, call the day a day watching it from midnight to midnight. Dark to dark. It teaches us that we begin in the darkness of the womb and end in the darkness of the grave. This is a lie. Our Lord set up the keeping of time so that those in Jesus day, saw the day as one from dusk to dusk. Subtle, but important. Through our baptism, given us when we did not comprehend, we have been called to be people of light. We have been called from the fleeting light of this world into the true Light which illumines eternity.

You walk now through what seems to be darkness, but in the Lord, there is no darkness at all. This room shines bright with light. We see. Even if the power went out and candles were doused, the light Christ can never go, nor will it ever go out. The light of the Risen Lord shines in your hearts. One does not take a candle and hide it under a bushel basket. We are commanded to let the shining light of all that we celebrate this night, to shine through us.

It is not, "Shine on me," as we sometimes sing. It is, "Shine through me." You, I, are one, created in the image of God. We are now called to live that image with a new resurrected life. Thought the dimness of this age will one day overtake us, yet we have hope, and hope does not disappoint us because we have been called in the glory of the One resurrected, to walk in His light.

Think of the cadence from Advent to Easter. We begin in the dark days of winter and see the Light of the world born in humble circumstances. We too have been born in humble circumstances. Completely dependent upon others. We grow and gain some independence, but we are never independent. In fact, we need one another. I thank you for being here tonight. I need you. The truth is that we need one another. We were not created to be socially distanced from one another. But sin and sickness get in the way and we are thrown into darkness.

The night is dark out there. Pale moonlight does not drown out the dark shadows that are always present in the darkness of night. But the light that is in you is greater. No darkness can overcome the light in you, except the darkness of an unwillingness to walk in the light of all that the resurrection means. Because Christ lives, you too shall live. The sting of sin is death. The empty tomb cries out, "Oh death, where is thy sting?" Death has been swallowed up in victory.

We have victory over death through Christ. It is not our victory, but His. He is the Savior and He has saved us. Walking in the light of salvation means not going back into the deeds of darkness. We know that because of the empty tomb, there is nothing hidden.

The darkness of this world tells you that you will die. Yes, the physical death awaits us. Even God did not exempt Himself from that death. That is why we joined in the lamentation of Good Friday. But here we are on the third day, for the Sabbath rest is over. We are here and we have heard the proclamation that death is not the final answer. **DEATH IS NOT THE FINAL ANSWER!** He, who bore our sins on the cross said, **IT IS FINISHED!**

We are forgiven. No longer do we need to walk in terror of the recompense of our sin. Our individual or our corporate sin. The world screams at you that you are guilty for existing. The Lord has taken all of the guilt away. Simply shine the light of Christ in the darkness of this world. Let your light so shine! We have been given a new life. Walk in the life that you have been given in Christ. In Him, by Him, and only through Him do you have light and life.

This is why Scripture clearly instructs us to be steadfast, immovable, always seeking to excel in the work of the Lord, because you know that the Risen Lord is with you and when You are laboring in this world in His light, you are not laboring in vain.

Walk out of the opening of the tomb and walk in the new life which is yours through the resurrection. Walk in His countenance as He makes of you what He will. Look to the Resurrected One as your hope. Hope upon hope has been given you. Because He lives, we too live. We do not live as the world lives, always seeking and never finding. We have been found and we walk in His presence knowing that He is with us always and will never leave, nor forsake us.

I tell you, the tomb is empty.

He is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Amen.