

April 15, 2017 – Easter Vigil

The Light Burns On, Come Be a Part of the Light

PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be mediations of our hearts. Be always acceptable unto Thee. O Lord our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

SERMON

I have to admit I'm glad that Holy Week is coming to an end. Not because it's a lot of work. It is a lot of work. But because so much of it is so emotional. So much of it has to deal with darkness. The darkness that the world seemed to be in when Jesus arrived. You might remember in the beginning of the gospel according to John. John understands Jesus to be the word. Just as importantly, the light that has come into the world and the darkness trying to overcome it. And we've spent the last week walking through the darkness trying to overcome the light. And it seemed to come so close to succeeding.

The darkness that abides within humanity tried to extinguish the light of God. And when you walk through that day after day. When you focus on it. When you try to speak about it. Just reading the story it brings lent into a compacted week where at least for me I come face to face with my own sinfulness. Because I understand that that is the darkness that tried to overcome Christ. The sinfulness that we all have. The sinfulness that became so pronounced as the light came to the people who should have been the light to the nations. And even those people who were supposed to have that closest relationship with God had gone so far astray that they tried to extinguish that true light from God. And it seemed like they succeeded.

And so those last two days, Friday and today, imagine the disciples, how they felt. The hope that they had clung to. The great excitement that they had been living with. As they have traveled with Jesus, as they have heard him preach and teach. As they saw him heal those who were broken. The ringing of the Hosannas as Jesus entered Jerusalem that week before. And then all became dark. It was dark when Jesus led them to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was dark when the chief priest and the police if you will came and arrested him. It was dark when he was brought to Annas and Caiaphas. The darkness was surrounding and yet Jesus was the light still burning.

And still causing pain to those who felt like it was not the light. Even when the daylight came on that Good Friday, as Jesus hung on the cross. As his life was ebbing away. Everything became dark, we hear in the scriptures. And they had to hurry and take his body down because it couldn't be up on the cross after sunset because the Sabbath was beginning. And there was the darkness of the tomb as the stone was rolled across the opening. Imagine the darkness of going to the dead. You're told that Jesus after he died, he went to those who had already died. Who had lived their lives, who had been separated from God, who existed in a darkness. And he brought the light there. And he offered salvation. He offered hope. He offered light.

We began this service in darkness. And we began it with kindling a new fire but not a new light. Because the light was never really extinguished. Hidden from our eyes for a while, yes. Certainly, the darkness that exists within each one of us sometimes darkens that light. It's not as clear, it's not as bright as it should be in our lives. As we are trying to follow it. As we are trying to lead our lives to hold up that light. A light to the world, a light of hope, a light of salvation. A light that says don't be afraid. A light that says there is a better way of living life than living only for ourselves.

We rekindled the light so that we could relight the pascal candle. The symbol of Christ's presence with us. It is the symbol of the resurrection, what we celebrate. It's the symbol that darkness and fear and despair and death have been overcome by the love of God. By the light of Christ. By the hope and promise of salvation. By that rebirth through baptism to be one with God just as Jesus was one with God.

To live our lives being led by that light from without and from within. To see the world in a different way. To see it with hope. To see it as resurrected people. We've already experienced what death is like in the absence of God. We are now called to live with the knowledge and truth that there is life. And that life is given to us. And that we will live that life. We will come to an ending of this life but only as we pass through to the eternal life that is offered in the salvation and reconciliation of Christ to God.

That's what we celebrate. That's what we celebrate every Sunday. We should come to this place every Sunday with thanksgiving. With celebration. With an understanding of what God has done for us because his love overcame our darkness and overcame our sinfulness. And overcame all that separates us from God. Not because God had to but because God wanted to. Because God wants to spend eternity with you. And that won't ever change. And all it requires is for us to say, Yes Lord. Here I am, accept me as your child. You have called me your own. You have baptized me, you have made me reborn by water and the Spirit. I don't always live it like I should. I don't always follow like I should. But I know that you continue to love and care for me. And call me to do better the next time and the next time. And the next time until finally I come to you, finally this journey has ended. And I can begin the journey of eternity in the presence of God.

That's what we celebrate. A light and a love that cannot be extinguished. We celebrate that and share it with the world. Because goodness knows, there is still plenty of darkness in the world. Our call as God's children is to say and proclaim, the light burns on. Come and be a part of the light.