

19 June 2011
The Feast of the Holy Trinity

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Let There Be Light”

Text: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:14a, 22-36

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the beginning, God said, “**Let there be light.**” And there was light. The light of life. And it was good.

Then man said, “**Let there be darkness.**” And there was darkness. The darkness of sin, the darkness of death, the darkness of separation and division, as Adam and Eve were separated from God and divided against one another. And it was not good.

But into this darkness, God shined a light. He promised to reunite what man had rent asunder. He promised to overcome the separation of sin and death that man had caused. A Light to overcome the darkness of sin and death.

And so, in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), God again said: **Let there be light.** And there was light. For Jesus, the Light of the world, came into the world, to shine upon us in our darkness. To shine the light of truth, of life, and of forgiveness.

But man again said, “**Let there be darkness**” when Jesus, the Light of the world, was hung up on the cross. His truth and life and forgiveness rejected by His rebellious and sluggish creatures. By those who loved the darkness more than the light.

Yet the light of God cannot be extinguished, for not only did the love and light of God shine forth from the cross, but once again, God brought forth the light in the resurrection of His Son, Jesus, from death and the grave. To scatter the darkness and defeat it. That the light of His truth, life, and forgiveness shine forever.

And that is the light that has shined upon us. Shined by the Holy Spirit. For in this work of creation and re-creation, it is not just the Father and the Son at work, but also the Holy Spirit. All of God.

For the same Spirit that hovered over the face of the waters in creation, and that hovered over, or overshadowed, the waters of Mary’s womb at the incarnation of

Jesus, also now hovers over the waters of Holy Baptism. Each time bringing forth light and life. That's why the ancients often called baptism *illumination*, or enlightenment. In those waters, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are active, just as in the beginning, and bringing forth life. Your life. A new and spiritual life for you who were dead in the darkness of your trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2), but now made alive by the Word and Spirit of God.

And so the Holy Trinity has brought light into your life. But what will your response to His goodness, to His Light, be? Will you, too, say: ***“Let there be darkness?”***

You do, don't you? I do. More often than I would like to admit.

We prefer the darkness of sin to the Light of truth, following our own ways and unkind impulses, rather than the truth and compassion of the Word of God.

We prefer the darkness of anger, bitterness, and resentment rather than the Light of love and forgiveness, holding onto grudges, wielding power over those smaller and weaker than us, and wanting service instead of laying down our lives for others.

We prefer the darkness of selfishness to the Light of faith, seeking and getting for ourselves, rather than trusting in our loving God who has promised to provide for us all that we need.

And it is not good. And of all this - and more - we need to repent. And realize that who we are and what we do needs to change. A change that we cannot do. A change that only God, who shines the Light into the darkness, can do.

And He does. He did with Adam, shining the light on his sin and exposing it. That wasn't pleasant for Adam and it isn't pleasant for us. Like us, Adam wanted to hide himself and his sin, but God knew that was not good. And so He comes to His children, to Adam and to us, as our Great Physician, to expose and clean out the sin with His forgiveness and give us life again. *Not life as we know it, but life as we don't know it.* A new and better life - the life of Christ. A life where we don't have to hide in the darkness, but live in the light of His love and forgiveness.

So the Great Physician came, and not only showed this life, but gave it. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, He cleansed lepers, made the lame to walk, gave voice to the mute, drove out demons, and raised the dead. But greatest of all, He took all our sin and sickness upon Himself and entered the darkness of sin and death with us, *for us*, that emerging triumphant over the darkness in His resurrection, His victory scatter this darkness in our lives once and for all. That we too emerge triumphant - in the end, yes, when we, too, rise from the dust of death, but also even now, as we live new and Christ-like lives, no longer

in the darkness of sin and death, but in the Light of love and truth and forgiveness.

This, too, is the work of the Holy Trinity for us. The **Father** who in love sent His Son to die for us, and the **Son** who in love sent the **Holy Spirit** to enlighten us and gather us to Christ, who gathers and takes us to His Father. That the world which, in the beginning, was very good, might be very good again.

Which is why Jesus, as we heard in the Holy Gospel, sends His apostles out **to all nations** - to enlighten the darkness of our world of sin and death with the Light of His forgiveness and life, and to do so **by baptizing and teaching**. For in these ways, the Holy Trinity is still coming to us and working for us. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not just *proclaimed* to us, but *given* to us. To **be with us always, to the end of the age**.

For if there's one word that best describes God, one word from the words of Matthew that we heard today, the Great Commission, it would be **given**. For our God is a giving God. Giving always. Giving His gifts. Giving Himself. Giving all that we need. *Even when He takes away from us, He is giving to us still*. For in *taking away* what is not good, those things that we turn into false gods and the unholy objects of our love, He is *giving* us life and true faith. Right faith, that we look to Him and trust in Him alone.

For in truth, God is not a demanding God or a taking God, as so many would describe Him - but a giving God. He withholds nothing good from you and seeks only the best for you, as a true and loving **Father**. And the **Son**, who laid down His life for you, now gives to you that very same Body and Blood in His Supper, that you be strengthened in your new man with the forgiveness of your sins and live the life to which you have been called. And the **Holy Spirit**, the gift of God to be with you always, gives you the light of wisdom and guidance that you need in a very dark world. To strengthen you with His love, to strengthen your prayers with His own, and to make you holy - in thought, word, deed, and desire. That God's "**Let there be light**" be true in you and your life, both now and forever.

And now we are sent forth from this place, to home, to work places, to schools, to neighbors, to friends, to all the nations God has gather to us here, with the light of His love and forgiveness. To live that light and to shine that light in the darkness. That may not be easy, but you know what? It will *always* be good.

And so to this good end we sang and prayed:

Give us lips to sing Thy glory, Tongues Thy mercy to proclaim,
Throats that shout the hope that fills us, Mouths to speak Thy holy name.
Alleluia, alleluia! May the light which Thou dost send

Fill our songs with alleluias, Alleluias without end!

God the Father, light-creator, To The laud and honor be.

To Thee Light of Light begotten, Praise be sung eternally.

Holy Spirit, light-revealer, Glory, glory be to Thee.

Mortals, angels, now and ever Praise the holy Trinity! (LSB #578, vs. 5-6)

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.