

Jesu Juva

“The Light Shines in the Darkness”

Text: John 1:1-14; Titus 3:4-7

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

We heard these words from St. John: ***The light shines in the darkness . . . He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.***

The darkness does not understand it. How could it? What God has done this day is unfathomable, incomprehensible, and quite frankly, against all human reason.

For today, the Lord God, the almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing God, creator and sustainer of all, the only infinite One, the alpha and the omega, without beginning or end, is born a man. ***The Word became flesh***; that’s how John put it. The glorious God lies humbly in a manger. The eternal Son of God, at the Father’s right hand, now Mary’s son, nestled in her arms.

The true light, the light of the world, the light ***which gives light to everyone***, John said, now lies in the darkness of this sin-darkened world. To enlighten it. To save it.

The darkness does not understand this. What darkness? The darkness of evil? Yes. The darkness of the evil one? Yes. The darkness of our evil world? Yes. The darkness of sin? Yes. But also our darkness - the darkness of our hearts and minds. Our sin-darkened minds focused only of the things of this world. Our sin-darkened hearts desiring only the things of this world.

We do not understand. What is God doing? Why am I here? Why is there so much evil and sadness in the world? Why are things not better for me? And what we do not understand we fear and sometimes turn away from. ***He came to his own, John said, and his own people did not receive him.***

It’s true, isn’t it? We turn to the darkness for answers, for comfort, for relief. We hurt those who hurt us, or better, *before* they can hurt us. We keep chasing joys that do not last and feelings which are even more fleeting. We question God and believe what makes sense to and pleases me.

And so ***there was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.***

John pointed to Jesus. God sent him because he knew the darkness would not understand what he was doing and how He was doing it. And so John proclaimed Jesus. Proclaimed that He is the light of the world. He is the Lamb of God, your Saviour. He is your God in human flesh.

And the darkness said: *him?* The just Mary's son. Just the carpenter's son. Nobody special. The darkness did not understand. Even worse, the darkness killed Him. Snuffed out the light of the world. Brought to an end the one without end. Crucified the very one who gave all things life. And by all rights, His death should have been our death. And I don't mean just that we deserved to die, although that's true. But in this sense: that when you kill what gives you life, your life should cease too. It's like turning off the pacemaker that keeps your heart beating, or stopping the oxygen that keeps you breathing. Kill the source of your life, and you're cutting off your future too.

But that did not happen. Because here's something else the darkness did not understand: ***the darkness could not overcome it.***

I'm not a scientist, but there something in the universe that science calls a black hole. And it's called that - black - because it's a place where the gravity is so intense that nothing can escape from it - not even light. And that's what the dark one, the evil one, thought: he could put out the light of the world.

And for a day or so it looked that way. A cold, lifeless body laid in a tomb. The Jewish leaders going home to prepare to worship the God they just killed, satisfied with their job well done. Was there ever a darkness so deep as that Good Friday?

But because it was, there was also never a light as bright as on that morning when the light came out of the darkness; when Jesus came out of His tomb alive. Triumphant. Glorious. As so John's Gospel ends just as it begins: ***the darkness could not overcome the light.***

And that is true not only of the world, in a general sense, but also of the darkness in you and your heart. And Titus, too, bore witness to us today, saying: ***when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. When He appeared*** - does that mean Jesus' birth or His resurrection?

Yes. The light that broke the darkness on that Christmas morn Is the light that broke the darkness on that Easter morn and is the light that broke the darkness of your heart when you were baptized. When, ***according to His mercy . . . you were saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on you richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.*** The *washing* for the forgiveness of your sins, your darkness, your doubt; and the *renewal* for a new life, a Spirit-filled life, a life of light. In Christ. When you were ***born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of***

man, but of God. And so what John said is now also true for you: *and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

You now see. And so while you still may not know what God is doing, why you are here, why there is so much evil and sadness in the world, or why things are not better for you - you know *the goodness and loving kindness of God*, for you know the One lying in the manger. And so you know the love of God who would give His Son for you. So that no matter how deep the darkness gets - in the world or in your life - you always have this light, to give you hope and peace and life.

And now, like John, you are sent out into a world of darkness, and you too get to proclaim this unfathomable, incomprehensible mystery: that on this day not just a child was born, but *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. And He still is. Still baptizing, still forgiving, still giving us His Body and Blood to nourish and strengthen us in Him. The Christmas gift that keeps on giving, and will never stop.

So *Joy to the World* (LSB #387), for the One *of the Father's Love Begotten* (LSB #384) has come, and is the child *Gentle Mary Laid* in a manger (LSB #374), the rest for our souls (LSB #372), and the song of the *Angels we have Heard on High* (LSB #368). All these you sing today, for the light has shone upon you and you are in darkness no more. Merry Christmas!

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