

Jesu Juva

“In Between, but Not in Doubt”

Tonight is a night unlike any other. It is a night “between.” We are between Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection to life. We are between the fulfillment of the old and the inauguration of the new. We are now rejoicing in our Saviour’s triumph but not yet in its fullness. We rejoice, and we anticipate an even greater joy.

And so tonight is a perfect night to celebrate baptism. Because our baptism into Christ is what pulls all of this together. In baptism, as we will hear, we are united with Jesus in His death and in His resurrection. It is for the drowning of the old man in us, and the rising of a new man, a new creation. In baptism, we receive Jesus’ triumph over sin, death, and the devil, and begin to live a life that will not end even now . . . but *not yet* in its fullness or completeness. We rejoice in these baptismal gifts now, and anticipate and even greater joy when our Lord Jesus comes again in glory.

So tonight we’ll feast on the Word of God. More Word tonight than any other service. We’ll hear stories of the old and mark how they teach of us Jesus and how He has made all things new. We’ll remember our baptism and that we wear the sign of the cross. And then we’ll look forward to the feast that awaits us tomorrow, even as we know that feast is but a foretaste of the feast to come.

And so as I remind you each year, we gather tonight in this vigil not to mourn the dead but to await the living. We gather as the wise virgins to await the coming of our bridegroom.

And also each year we hear the same story as the last of all: The three young men in the fiery furnace. It seems to me with each year that goes by how much more timely that story becomes. For just this week some armed thugs in the name of a false god assaulted a college campus in Kenya and basically did the same thing as King Nebuchadnezzar - any who were not willing to bow down to and confess their god were not thrown into a fiery furnace, but shot. Room by room then went in their murderous rage until not three, but nearly 150 lay dead.

Yet both the three young men, and the nearly 150 young men and women, knew this: that whether they died or not, their Saviour, our Saviour, would deliver them. Whether the flames burn or not, whether the bullets hit their targets or not, our Lord is greater than any king, weapon, or threat on this earth. Our Saviour is greater than even death itself.

That is what those three young men made known to King Nebuchadnezzar that day, and what we make known still today. And while the Lord took them through those flames that day, one day later died. Was it from flames or sword or old age? We do not know. But

the Lord was no less faithful then as He was that day in the fiery furnace. For though they died, yet shall they live. Our Lord was with them still and took them with Him through death to life again.

And it is so for us. Our Lord is with us and protecting us from danger and harm every day, but one day we too will die. Whether it be from flames or bullet, knife or old age, we know not. But this we know: even then our Saviour will be with us, taking us through death and to our rest and life eternal. Our Lord is faithful and He will do it. He promised us so in baptism, He strengthens us in that promise with His absolution, He feeds and strengthens us with His Body and Blood, and the flames of hell stand no chance against those great gifts.

So let us hear now the Word of God. Listen in all these words for Jesus, how they all point to and talk of Him. Hear of His goodness and faithfulness, now and forever. And know that He is all this **for you**. Until the not yet becomes the now when our Bridegroom appears and takes us into the feast and joy that has no end.

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