

Easter Vigil 2020

John 10:1-18

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed Alleluia!

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, all you really need to know tonight is that Jesus was resurrected from the dead in the middle of the night. In the middle of the night, in deep darkness, Jesus passed from death to life.

And so we celebrate by proclaiming – Jesus Christ is the light of the world! The light no darkness can overcome!

And this light is life! Life for all of creation.

So tonight we celebrate - life is stronger than death! Life has the final word! Light shines in the darkness! Alleluia!

If you have been to the Denver Art Museum, you may have seen a chandelier called “The Way the Moon is in Love with the Dark.” It’s a black chandelier with bright lights. The artist was inspired by a poem of the same name that talks about how the moon cannot shine unless it’s dark.

Without the darkness, we cannot really appreciate the light. Without darkness, we cannot understand just how amazing God is. Without death, we cannot appreciate life. Without Jesus dying, we have no idea just how powerful God’s light is.

And so we are here, gathered in the darkness to remember Christ risen from the dead and to celebrate that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot over power it.

As we have been following the Gospel of John these three days, you may remember that it was in darkness that Judas handed Jesus over to be crucified, and now it is in the darkness that Jesus is resurrected to new life.

God has taken the darkness and transformed it. The darkness is no longer a scary place of death, but is a hope-filled place of life.

Resurrection happens at night.

Right now we are in a scary time with the Pandemic and many may be asking where God is in the midst of this? Well – all we need do is go look into the tomb. Go look into the home of death and see that it's empty.

Death is not eternal, but life is! So, we need have no fear of the darkness, because we know that it is in the darkness that God's life shines. In the midst of death there is always life. In the midst of darkness there is always light. Because it is in the darkness that life is created.

If we go all the way back to Genesis, we'll remember that God created in the darkness, and the first thing God created was light.

And if we look at the seed in the garden, we know that it is from the darkness of the soil that the shoot springs forth. It has to be buried first before it can grow and live, and once it sprouts it seeks the light. Life always seeks the light, and Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

As we sit here in the darkness, literally, we are reminding ourselves that Jesus was resurrected in the darkness. Jesus passed from death into life in the darkness. And so, in the midst of these dark times, we are called to be like Mary Magdalene. We are called to go and tell everyone the good news.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! Death does not have the final say! God is all about life and we will come through this on the other side in new life as well. New life, because you cannot go through death without being altered in some way, and we all will be different in some way after we have been set free from our tombs of self-isolation.

Traditionally, it was at the Easter Vigil that baptisms were done. After 40 days of preparation, those who wanted to join the Church would come forward at the Easter Vigil to be baptized. In the darkness, they received their new life joined into Jesus' death and resurrection. And receiving the assurance of God's unending love, they were adopted into God's family.

As Jesus tells Mary, "I am going to my father and your father, to my God and your God." Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are brought into God's family, and in baptism we are given that assurance. In baptism, we are called by our name and acknowledged as children of God.

Can you hear God calling you by name? What is your response?

Now, had we done a real vigil, we would have been at this until the sun rise. That's why there are so many reading, and we only did some of them. Vigil is a time to sit in the darkness and live in the hope of the light.

Throughout the Old Testament, God was revealing God's plan of salvation and promise of steadfast, or unwavering and dedicated, love. God is faithful to us, even to death, and into resurrection.

Easter really is an astronomical event, on so many levels – it's based on the phases of the moon and the rising of the sun. Because of that, we are reminded that darkness is never the end of the story, actually, it's just the beginning.

In the Jewish understanding, a new day starts at sunset, as a reminder that God created the universe out of darkness.

Tonight we witness to the light shining in the darkness.

Now may we be like Mary Magdalene who showed up in the darkness only to be greeted by the light of the world, the resurrected Jesus Christ. And may we go and share that good news with everyone we meet.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it!

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Amen.

