

Easter Vigil  
April 16, 2022

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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

Happy Easter!

Tonight we are gathered in the dark to remember that darkness is not stronger than God. The darkness is not stronger than the light of Christ.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it! Alleluia!

In the darkness we remember that life triumphs and love wins. A single flame, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, banishes all darkness.

Tonight we celebrate that darkness cannot snuff out the light, because the light refuses to be extinguished.

In the darkness, we remember Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Alleluia!

And as we read through the Old Testament tonight, we see that God's light has always been shining for us, from the first day of creation when God called light out of the darkness. There have been dark times, but the light always shone.

Light and life – they go hand in hand. Without the light there is no life, and the good news is that light is stronger than darkness, so we celebrate tonight that Jesus, the Christ, is risen from the dead. In the darkness we proclaim light is stronger.

The light is Christ. Thanks be to God.

At the beginning of worship this evening, we started in the dark with one little flame. In the darkness our little flame danced and we contemplated just how powerful one little flame is. And then at the pronouncement of the Gospel, we turned on all of our lights, so that the darkness was completely banished.

With the flames and the light, I can't help but think about all of the wildfires we've faced here in Colorado recently. It is so dry here in the West. Even right now in the Spring time when it should be wet, we are under fire warnings because of the wind and lack of humidity.

We certainly can appreciate here how one flame can transform an entire landscape. One spark can cause a huge wildfire, which destroys the old, but also makes room for the new.

In Jesus' day, wildfires were well known as well. Jerusalem, after all, is in a desert where water is precious and things burn easily.

Wildfires are destructive, yes, but they also open the land up to something new. The dead debris is burned away and new life pokes up from the ashes as it reaches toward the sun, which had been previously blocked by all the junk that had been covering the seeds, and some seeds actually need fire in order to germinate.

Death and resurrection. Fire and new life.

What is perceived as evil is turned into good. What was once thought destroyed is actually alive. What we thought was nothing, ash, is actually being used for creation.

That's what we celebrate on this night. The Paradox. Light in the midst of darkness and life in the midst of death.

What we celebrate tonight is hope. As I always like to say, "Hope springs eternal," which is a quote from Alexander Pope's poem "Essay on Man." In his poem, Pope wonders at the complexity of the world and how we don't know what's happening, and yet hope springs eternal.

That reminds me of Mary at the tomb. Twice she laments that she doesn't know where her Lord is. She doesn't understand where Jesus' body could be. She doesn't know what's going on. She tells both the angels and Jesus, who she thinks is the gardener, "We do not know where they have laid him."

Even seeing Jesus Mary cannot fathom that it is he until he calls her name. Upon hearing her name, all the puzzle pieces fall into place, and she realizes that what she thought was true is false, and what was false is true. Jesus is not dead, but alive!

And because of that, our hope springs eternal. As complex as the world is, as much as we lament that we have no idea what is going on, we know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not and cannot overcome it.

It's not that God has a plan, but that God turns evil into good. God turns murder into life. God turns the crucifixion into forgiveness. God burst out of the tomb, the box we literally place God in, and flips everything on its head.

God is alive and on the move!

Tonight we proclaim once again that we are not God. And thanks be to God for that! Because, we need a Savior. We cannot save ourselves. We tend to be on the destructive side of things, but God is always creating new life, even out of our messes and through us messes as well as we proclaim that we have no idea what's going on. Really, we don't.

And that's ok. We don't have to know what's going on. All we need to know is that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it!

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God! Amen.