

THE LIGHT OF LIFE IN THIS FALLEN CREATION

Hear again the Word of the Lord:

The Light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

This Wednesday's Advent readings illumine us with the Light of this Truth: Jesus is the eternal Light of life Who remains active in His Creation. The seasonal elements which are placed to support our reception of God's gifts in this place are used to support our annual themes. We are in a season of light. As the darkness outside these church walls creeps in earlier each day as the calendar rolls through the four Sundays of Advent this year, the illumination in and around us increases.

Outward, around the circle of the Advent wreath, the light of the Hope candle will be joined in succession by that of Peace, Joy and Love. As the Season of Light draws to an end, as the incarnate coming of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is set to be celebrated again, lights will glow from the greenery along the windows. We have around us visible reminders that the Light of God still shines, shoving back the darkness.

In addition to all that, the Advent Tree stands. Its presence is used to remind us of God's good gifts of light and life. (Yes, it is plastic, but it may still serve as a symbol of those treasures!) In the image of the tree, tonight we may be reminded of the green herbs God gave to sustain our first parents and all creatures in the Garden of Eden. These visual images, the colors of the season, the hymns and readings of this special time of the year, all this year are being used to support this congregation's proclamation of Jesus as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Tonight, we are hearing of Him through His Work as the Word in creating light and life in creation for us children of men. Next week, we shall hear of Him in His

¹ John 1:5.

Divine Work of Re-Creation and Restoration of the fallen creation and creatures. The third week, we shall hear Christ proclaimed in His Work of the New Creation through, in particular, Holy Baptism. All of that began for our Wednesday remembrances of Jesus' comings through the proclamation of our first Psalm. Hear again of the Creator God watching over His highest creatures:

*The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.²*

Those words, chosen by the LCMS' Commission on Worship from the sources they used to draw the seasons of the Church Year into the daily Word, are proclaimed here each Wednesday of every Advent since 2006. They declare God's care for His creatures, especially for the sons of Adam. It is His desire that sinful humans, once created and declared good, look to Him to declare them so again. It is His will that none should be lost and fall short of His glory, and that all might be saved from an eternity separated from Him Who is the Source of Light and Life. From that, our second annual Advent Wednesday weekly Psalm declares of those who hear His Word, believe it and are given His life:

*You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.³*

Those words, spoken or chanted here each Advent Wednesday, declare that which the Creator God desires to grant unto those Who continue to call upon in the Faith. They proclaim His will for you, in this season of Light. You will hear more of that reality as the third week of Advent, marked by the candle named Joy, builds upon the Hope you are being given tonight and the Peace which will be pronounced upon you next week. On to our third Psalm for this week, from which you heard repeated:

*The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,*

² Psalm 14:2, ESV

³ Psalm 16: 11.

*for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.⁴*

In those inspired words, you have God's declaration that the entire Creation is His. As the One Who once declared His completed Creation, "very good," God reminds His people that it is all still His long after our first parent's fall into sin.⁵ That means that He, as Divine Creator is still watching over it, working to sustain light and life in it, continually mending the brokenness of fallen humans.

As He notes holes that sin creates in that which He once knitted together as good, God sends forth His Word to fill in the gaps. God's attentiveness to His creatures who are continually unraveling on account of sin is even greater than that of a loving grandma who continues to mend the pulls and holes in the sweaters and afghan blankets she has knitted for her grandchildren. She may grow weary of watching and fixing those knitted treasures, but God never tires of mending His broken creatures.

God's work of mending the broken children of Adam began in His Divine Mind even before the first man fell from grace. His care for you, in your sins, to bring you forgiveness, began before time itself, let alone before He knitted you together in your mother's womb. That eternal care was again declared as grounded in the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the God/Man you know to be Jesus, the Word in our flesh. It is of His coming you are to hear a lot about this Advent Season. From the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, we hear of that Word. This year, He is coming to us through one of the Lutheran Servanthood School's two series just produced (the other one is to be used to receive God's gifts next year). All the readings for this year, except the Psalms, were chosen on the basis of St. John's inspired texts. We now hear from the first guiding Gospel text, as the Creator's Word begins:

*In (the) beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (alongside) God,
and God was the Word.⁶*

⁴ Psalm 24:1-2

⁵ Genesis 1:31

⁶ John 1:1.

At the beginning of that text, the first two words are identical to the words which begin the Greek translation of the Book of Genesis. The hearers of the Word are to understand that this text from St. John's inspired records is drawing us to find parallels to God's work in creation. His words declare that the Word was ever alongside God, not just with Him but coeternal and coequal alongside Him. (That sounds a bit like the Creed this congregation just confessed to one another this past Sunday, does it not?) Having heard that God was the Word, that is that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is God, we now are illumined by this truth:

This One, He was, in (the) beginning, alongside the God.⁷

There we have the declaration that the God Who is the Word, is from eternity, alongside God. He is one with God. He is not a god, but One with the God. The Unity of God, in this text, of the Father and the Son, is being expressed. The Son is not a lesser god, nor a greater god, but One with God. In the Unity of the Godhead, this Word is proclaimed:

All things through Him became, and without Him became not one thing having become.⁸

This means that the Word, the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was operative in the beginning of Creation. He is declared to be the Creative Word. Furthermore, in His creation through the Word, all things, at the end of the sixth day, were declared to be this:

And saw Elohim the things all which He made, and behold it was very good.⁹

This means we have heard tonight the Word declared as operative, alongside the Father, in the Creation. As their work was completed, God declared it to be even more than the good He had pronounced each preceding day. With the creation

⁷ John 1:2.

⁸ John 1:3.

⁹ Genesis 1:31a.

of man, male and female, and God's giving them His gifts of food and dominion over the whole creation, He declared it all completed, and named it very good. That which God declares to be good is truly good, all other concepts, thoughts, and images of good fall short of that which He names, "very good."

That applies to you in the Word Who comes and sustains His creation. He declared you to be "good" with the water and Word of Holy Baptism. He named you with His Name, and imputed His very goodness to you. That you have times when you are not "good" does not mean that His Word is not true. Those are the times when you are rejecting His will for you, turning away from His Name. That is true even if you want to be a "very good" Christian by emulating the "best" of the New Testament saints. Whenever you are focused on you, even with good intentions, you will fall short, and sin.

That is why the Creator Word gives you His Word of Forgiveness... Ahh, though I do not want to step on the preachers' proclamations of God's coming in Re-Creation and New Creation the next two weeks, I am compelled by the Gospel to declare to you that God, in granting you who are repentant His blood-bought forgiveness, is giving you just what you need to remain in the Light of Life in this fallen creation. Back to tonight's Gospel:

In Him life was, and the life was the light of the men.¹⁰

The Word of St. John, the Word of God, declares that life was in the Word, in the Son in creation, in the One Whom you know to be Jesus. His eternal life became, in human time, light for all who were dwelling in the darkness of sin. As the light of the candles here each week will grow, shoving back the earthly darkness, so too did the light of Life grow among men. His glory, His brilliance, declared by the clamoring crowds in many of your ears this past Sunday to be the One Who would "Save Now!," grew through that week long ago.

¹⁰ *John 1:4.*

As a light lifted high to illumine and drive back the darkness of a long hallway, Jesus was lifted up to draw all men to Himself. As He hung suspended between heaven and earth, His glory in the gory cross for all to see, the Light of Life seemed to end. The blackness of death seemed to have snuffed out his life, as it does for all humans (save a couple in all of previous history as recorded by the inerrant Scriptures). There was the Word, His light gone out, dead in the sins of the whole world, lifeless in your sins.... But, John's declaration of the Light of Life continues with a promise of the reality that God effected once and for all:

The Light continues to shine in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.¹¹

For you, the Word died, the Light of Life was extinguished in your sins. For, you, the Creator was buried in the dust from which He formed your first father. For you, the Son was given, His blood was shed and your sins were covered over. For you, the Son was raised on the third day, that you may ever know that the Name which you bear – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – will ever mean that you are right with God.

The Light of that Truth continues to shine forth in a world full of the darkness of sin. Even when the darkness seemed to have won, it could not, for the eternal Word remained. That Word promised His death to atone for the sins of the whole world. The Light of His life declares you who believe to be right with God, and to have your victory in His continual coming.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Advent I, Wednesday

Psalm 14; Psalm 16; Psalm 24; Genesis 1:26-31; Colossians 1:15-18; John 1: 1-5

December 3, 2014

Pastor Michael H. Merchise

SOLI DEO GLORIA

¹¹ John 1:5.

NOTES:

The Light in the darkness continues to shine, and the darkness it did not overcome.¹²

¹² *John* 1:5.