

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Look with the Light

March 22, 2020

It's said that darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. Darkness and blindness are words often used throughout Scripture to describe our sinfulness—the absence of the true Light. In our continued Lenten journey, we prepare our hearts for the dark afternoon of Good Friday at the cross. Yet even in that darkness, Jesus Christ brings the light of life. In our times of spiritual blindness and comfort in the darkness of this world, we gather again today to see His light through our vision of Spirit-given faith, that our eyes may look to Him who is the light of the world—the light no darkness can overcome.

“Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness” (LSB 849)

1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
With a liberating light;
Praise the One who frees the pris'ners
Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the Gospel,
Healing ev'ry dread disease,
Calming storms, and feeding thousands
With the very Bread of peace.

2 Praise the One who blessed the children
With a strong, yet gentle word;
Praise the One who drove out demons
With the piercing two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water
To the desert's burning sand;
From this Well comes living water
Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

3 Let us praise the Word incarnate,
Christ, who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose victorious
That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done;
Let us praise the true Redeemer,
Praise the One who makes us one.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we remain in darkness without Your light, and we walk in blindness if You do not lead. Even in our times of comfort in the darkness and times of willful blindness, You shine Your light of truth and call us Your children of light that we may see and live in Your grace. Help us to look to You always that we serve You ; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Isaiah 42:14–21

For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant. ¹⁵ I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. ¹⁶ And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. ¹⁷ They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, "You are our gods." ¹⁸ Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! ¹⁹ Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD? ²⁰ He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear. ²¹ The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his law and make it glorious.

Who are the blind that need to be led in a way they do not know? We are because in our sin we see only what we want to see. We look for what will satisfy us first regardless of the needs of others. Our sight is in darkness. We cannot see the truth. We see only what we want to see. This is evident in the disciples' question in John 9:1-2. "As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The disciples are assuming that suffering comes from specific sins. We assume too. We are blind to the truth. We see only what we want to see.

God changes us so we can see the truth. Through repentance we begin to see what we need to see. "And Peter said to them, "**Repent and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) Those who say they have nothing to ask forgiveness for are blind. Those who seek forgiveness for their sins are the ones who are beginning to see. Jesus' words reveal this to us. "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind" (John 9:39).

God's forgiveness brings us fully into the light so we can see clearly. "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) Jesus' words are clear. It is through the eyes of faith that we see clearly. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) Faith allows us to realize God's forgiveness in our lives. This is entirely the Lord's work so we can trust it. "And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that

they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.” (Isaiah 42:6)

Suffering is not just punishment to those who believe in Jesus. Christ took the punishment for sin upon Himself when He died on the cross. His resurrection from the dead proved the victory there is over sin, death, and Satan’s power. God has, “called you **out of darkness** into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9) When we view events through the cross of Christ, we see the victory we have in Christ regardless of suffering. Of the blind man whom the disciples thought a specific sin caused the man’s blindness Jesus said, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 3:3) God’s glory will be revealed in events that are viewed through the eyes of faith. That may seem to be really hard to fathom when we are looking at things like Covid-19 unless we look at them through the eyes of faith, trusting that our Lord will work things out for good for us. ²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

LORD’S PRAYER *Matthew 6:9–13*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

“God Loved the World So That He Gave” (*LSB 571*)

1 God loved the world so that He gave
His only Son the lost to save,
That all who would in Him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

2 Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All then who trust in Him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.

3 God would not have the sinner die;
His Son with saving grace is nigh;
His Spirit in the Word declares
How we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives all sins which you have done;
And, justified by Jesus' blood,
Your Baptism grants the highest good.

5 If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;
That is the firmest ground of faith.

6 Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To Thee, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

Numbers 6:24–26

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.