

Friday, April 2, 2021 – Good Friday Tenebrae
“The Light”

Luke 23: 44-45a

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CPR “Our Savior’s Wounded Body” Series

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Every eighteen months, somewhere around the world, the sun goes black in the middle of the day. One minute the day is bright and sunny; the next minute the sun goes dark, and you can even see the stars of night in the middle of the day. It’s called a solar eclipse. The sun is much larger than the moon, but it’s also much farther away than the moon. So, at just the right time, in just the right place, the moon moves in between the sun and the earth and just about completely blocks out the sun. However, a total eclipse lasts a maximum of only seven minutes, and often far less than that. It’s beautiful, but rare.

Far rarer is when the sun literally fails to shine. It has happened only twice, ever. The first time, the people of God were slaves in the land of Egypt. They were forced to do whatever their Egyptian masters commanded them to do. They were forced to make bricks out of straw. At one point, they were forced to find their own straw and make bricks at their own expense! Their masters were hard on them, so God lifted up a man to lead his people out of their slavery. He lifted up Moses. Moses was sent to Egypt to command Pharaoh to let God’s people go. Pharaoh refused to free his slaves, so God began to send plague after plague. The ninth plague God sent was darkness. For three days, the land of Egypt was dark. The sun went dark. The moon stayed dark. The stars went dark. It was completely dark in the land of the Egyptians. The people of God, who lived nearby, had light, but the Egyptians were forced to live in darkness for three entire days. This was no eclipse. Solar eclipses last only seven minutes. This lasted three days. God was judging them for their sins, and God was at work freeing his people. God was judging sin and freeing his people.

Jesus came into this world and said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12). We have the sense that darkness is scary or at

least more dangerous than the daylight. More crimes are committed at night. Even though no monsters live under our beds, children are afraid of the possibility mostly at night. They have no fears during the day, but once the light goes dark, imaginations run wild. We are curious about strange shapes during the day, but a strange shape or shadow at night makes our pulse run faster until we figure out what it is. Deep down, something about the dark unsettles us. Here is Jesus, in the middle of it all, saying, “I am the light of the world.” He calls us away from dark deeds. He calls us away from dark thoughts. He calls us away from words that mean dark things. He calls us away from the darkness we are tempted to dabble in and “into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

When the sun rose on that first Good Friday, Jesus was in front of men who desired to do dark things to him. All through the night, they had been harassing him and mocking him and trying to condemn him of crimes they had thought of in midnight councils. They waited until dark to arrest Jesus, and through the night they did not leave him alone. Finally, as the sun rose, they took him to Pontius Pilate and did the darkest thing of all. They demanded that Pilate put Jesus to death on the cross. Not three hours after the sun’s light flooded the land, Pilate gave the order for their dark demands. Jesus was nailed to that cross on that first Good Friday. The sun rose higher in the sky, shedding its light on all those with dark plans in their hearts, and finally it reached its highest point—noon. There, from its highest point, the brightest place from which the sun could shine down, “the sun’s light failed” (Lk 23:45). It failed for three hours, until the last dying breath of Jesus was breathed out. The sky was as black as the night. This was no eclipse. This was no solar flare. This was an act of God. It was as if the sun, which was created through Jesus, was reeling at how creation had rebelled against its Maker. Here God was judging, as he did in Egypt. God was judging sin. He was judging your sins and my sins, which were nailed to that cross in the body of Jesus. There God was judging sin and, as he did in Egypt, he was setting his people free. He was setting you free from your sins and giving you life through the death of his Son.

That light, Jesus Christ, was put in a dark hole called a tomb, and he was left there to stay. Yet in the darkness of that grave, our light shone again. The tomb could not hold him. That light shone too brightly. And when the stone over the tomb was rolled away, the world could see that the light was still shining brightly. Death could not hold him in. Death could not keep its dark grip on Jesus, for He is the light of the world.

Jesus shines today, because Jesus is the light of the world. In the Book of Revelation (1:16), we see Jesus, our light, standing and talking to John. His whole body is shining, but John especially mentions Jesus' face—it shines like the sun. That is the light we have in the face of the darkness of death. That is the light we have looking at Jesus' death tonight. That is the light we have when we look at our own death. That light, Jesus, comes for his people. By the darkness that our light, Jesus, suffered, we have been healed. In Jesus' name, Amen.