

“The Life and Light of Men”

God’s love for you – and for all people – is revealed right from the beginning. “In the beginning” God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it – not for selfish or egotistical reasons – but for you.

God doesn’t create in order that He might be served by His creation – or because He can’t live without our adoration and praise. NO, He creates in order that He might have someone and something to serve. God is love – and He creates in order that we might be the object of His love.

This should not come as a surprise to us – after all – we see this throughout the Bible. God has been revealing this love to us from the beginning. The one true God is not like the kings and lords of this world – selfish tyrants and narcissists. Rather, He is the One who creates, gives, sustains, provides, defends, guards and protects us.

He creates Adam and Eve – places them in their proper order in creation – puts them in the Garden, gives them food, gives them their work – and so He does, for all their descendants.

When the Creation was killing itself with its wickedness – God comes to the rescue by means of a flood. He saves by His washing – bringing forth a new creation.

God chose the nation of Israel – not because they were the preeminent nation, worthy, powerful, and so forth – but so that they would be the means of His love and service for the salvation of the whole world.

God’s desire to serve is seen most clearly when His own Son becomes incarnate – when God takes on human flesh and blood – all so that He might redeem His creation. Jesus, the Son of Man, did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom – to redeem me, a lost and condemned person.

And God the Holy Spirit is poured out on creation – not to be served, but to serve – by pointing all people to the only hope for salvation, Jesus Christ. Through God’s Word, the Holy Spirit enlightens our path – that we might live by faith in Jesus.

This is why the Lutheran Confession states that – “It is by faith that God wants to be worshiped, namely, that we receive from Him what He promises and offers.” (AP AC Art. IV, Tappert 114.49).

“In the beginning” God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. Without His gift of light, there is only darkness. “In the beginning” God creates LIGHT – and gives LIFE to all Creation – by the power of His Word.

In our Gospel reading, that Creation is brought forward in time. As it was “in the beginning” – so it is now – that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Darkness is a nothing. It is the absence of light. That’s why light always wins. There are flashlights that fill the void and drive away the darkness. There is no such thing as a “dark-light” that you turn on and darkness overcomes the light.

Let’s go back to the beginning – to the creation – and specifically, to the creation of light. On the first day God creates light – but it’s not until the fourth day that God creates the greater and the lesser lights (the sun and the moon). That’s a head-scratcher, isn’t it? How can you have light – without the sun?

Because the sun is not the source of light, Jesus is! In verse 4, God’s Word says – “In Him [that’s Jesus] was LIFE, and the LIFE was the LIGHT of men.” Jesus is the Word that was “with God” in the beginning, and all things were made through Him. He gives His life-giving-light – and then locates that light in the sun – putting it in its proper order – so that all creation may benefit – receiving LIGHT, and LIFE, from Him.

Jesus is the LIGHT of the world. Take Him away and there is only darkness. Jesus is the LIFE of the world. Take Him away, and there is only death.

Take a flashlight, turn it on, cover it up with a blanket – and the light is still shining, even though you can’t see it. The sun, covered by heavy ash from an erupting volcano – is still shining, even if you can’t see it.

So, in our darkened world and darkened lives. Our sin, and the wickedness of all mankind, covers up the Light of Christ – but it cannot overcome Him. His light still shines.

Jesus, the LIFE and LIGHT of men, is conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary – but you cannot see Him. Jesus, the LIFE and LIGHT of men, is laid in a manger – but His humanity hides His divinity – and rather than seeing God, you only see His flesh and blood.

The glory of God is to serve mankind – and yet, at the height of His glory, when Jesus, the LIFE and LIGHT of men, is nailed to a cross – all you see is a gory and shameful death. And when God-in-the-flesh-Jesus is laid in a tomb – it seems that the darkness has overcome the light.

In the midst of that darkness His Word creates the light of hope. “It is finished” He declares. Sin and death are not victorious. I have overcome them by my suffering and death – and my resurrection shines this LIGHT and LIFE into all the world!

Indeed, a Savior has been born! “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

This is His glory – that the Son of God should be conceived, born, suffer, die, and be buried – so that by His resurrection you might see His love for you – a gracious love that takes your sin as His own, redeeming you – that you might know His truth, that He has come to serve you with His salvation.

“As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be” – God, in His love, serves you. That’s why He’s here this morning – to comfort you by His Word – that powerful and life-giving Word that chases away your darkness, and enlightens your path. He’s here to wash you – to create you anew – making you to be a child of God.

Jesus, the LIFE and LIGHT of men, is here to give you His Body and Blood – even though you cannot see it under the bread and wine – so that He might give you His life, a life that has no end.

And now, may the LIFE and LIGHT of Jesus Christ shine in your life – that others might see God’s glory and receive His service. And let us, with all the faithful – rejoice and give thanks – for the Word who was made flesh, for our salvation. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.