

Watch with Creation at the Cross

Light Creator Suffers Darkness

- ⌘ **Light created**
- ☠ **Lost in darkness**
- ⊕ **Darkness defeated**
- ⌘ **Light restored**

In the Name of Christ our Light, dearly redeemed children of Light,

On Buntrock Avenue near Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary stands a statue of a police officer holding a child. It depicts Police Chief Thomas Buntrock who died rescuing a kidnapped baby. His is a tragic story. On Sunday, December 2, 1979, an armed robbery suspect fled into a home in Mequon, Wisconsin, taking hostage a man and a two-month-old girl. Chief Buntrock negotiated the release of both in exchange for himself. Several hours later the robber moved his hostage to a car where he sat in the back with Chief Buntrock behind the wheel. In the gathering darkness, the Chief turned and lunged into the rear seat, subduing and disarming the suspect. He had the robber in custody. As they emerged in the shadows, a fellow officer mistook the Chief. The hero was killed by “friendly fire.”

Is Jesus’ story a tearful tragedy? Was He kidnapped by mistake and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane by human authorities? If He could have saved Himself and His disciples from danger and death, why did Jesus not turn and overpower the mob in the darkness? What does this mean that Jesus humbly submits saying: *“This is your hour – when darkness reigns”*? May the Lord enlighten our hearts as we *Watch with Creation at the Cross*. Tonight the **Light Creator Suffers Darkness**.

⌘ **Light created**

Was Jesus missing power in Gethsemane? Was He missing completely from creation? We need God’s light to see Him. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”* (Genesis 1:1-3 NIV)

Before there was nothing except God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – eternally existing without beginning and without end. We have birthdays and celebrations along with major dates that hinge our lives as when people say, “Ever since 9/11...” But there was no time and nothing but darkness until the Creator went to work and said, *“Let there be light.”* Sun, moon and stars would have to wait until the fourth day, but the Hebrew *“light”* can be energy or light-giving bodies just as we speak of “light from a streetlight.” What it was like before God *“separated the light from the darkness”* we don’t know, any more than a whale could say what you had for dinner. But we do know from this one eyewitness account that *“God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.”* All was good with **Light created**.

Even at night God was with His first children, Adam and Eve. God is not bound by light or darkness, *“for darkness is as light to you.”* (Psalm 139:12 NIV) They could look at His light and not be blinded as our poor eyes hurt just looking at the sun. How bright it must have been in a world where shadows held no lurking criminals and friends could tell one from another because friends is all they were – Adam and Eve with each other, and best friends with God. How quickly paradise was plunged into a shadowy planet with our first parents...

☠ **Lost in darkness**

You can tell how dark it got in the souls of Adam and Eve when God's daily visit became their terror and their sin-clouded conscience tried to hide from the All-Seeing, Ever-Present Creator. How could they not see their rebellion in God's light when His questions were so simple? Instead they darkly blamed each other, Satan and ultimately their gracious Creator. Every day was Valentine's Day until they plunged into the darkness of their foolish denial: ***"The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."*** ***"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*** (Genesis 3:12f NIV)

We cannot find our way out of this **darkness**. It's as if the human race is in a pitch dark room with a tiny light switch on the far side. Even if some super individual had a flashlight, we could not get across the gaping abyss. And if by some miracle we could run and jump, our blindness and weakness would only prove God true again: ***"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** (Romans 3:23 NIV)

Now loving couples find the creeping **darkness** of selfishness where love loses to heartache. Challenges that ought to draw us closer often leave us feeling isolated and alone. How many times hasn't the tragedy played out on the silver screen where fame and fortune and idolizing fans cannot save a single actor from his own dark night? Without a doubt we would all stay **Lost in darkness** because of our dark rebellion against God and our blind lack of love for one another. Jesus warned that ***"the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*** One man landed there for coming to God's wedding in the filthy rags of his own righteousness. Another was thrown ***"into outer darkness"*** for his stingy attitude toward God and misuse of God's money. (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30 KJV) It sends a chill down your spine when Jesus warns: ***"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"*** (Matthew 6:22-23 NIV) **How great**, indeed, until we *Watch with Creation at the Cross* and see...

✝ **Darkness defeated**

Those who take the oath to "Serve and Protect" leave their earthly troubles behind and face their Maker as will each one of us. But what sadness for the fellow officer who must live the rest of his life replaying the tape in his mind. "If only I had waited a little longer....But, no, it was a split second decision that had to be made." No matter how many times sympathetic coworkers and loved ones say, "It wasn't your fault. None of us could see," how you would wish for a different ending.

Would Jesus have to look back and wish He had done differently in the **darkness** that gathered that night? It may seem to us that God has a strange way of seeing **Darkness defeated**. Only a few hours earlier Jesus gathered His disciples to celebrate **Darkness defeated** in Egypt when light shown in all the Israelite homes and the death angel passed over, saving their firstborn sons. At the Passover meal Jesus kept trying to penetrate the dark heart of Judas with verbal warnings and the piece of bread dipped for the traitor at the table. No one understood when Jesus said, ***"What you are about to do, do quickly.... As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night."*** (John 13:27,30)

But Light stayed behind to defeat the **Darkness**. ***"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."*** (John 13:34f) Could Jesus have said it more convincingly than with the bread and wine, saying, ***"This is my body....This is my blood"***? While their dark hearts still argued about who was the greatest, Jesus Lord and Master of Light kept pressing against the **Darkness**. ***"I am among you as one who serves....I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me."*** (Luke 22:19f,29) Jesus would not give up until He had carried the **darkness** of our sins to the cross and washed them all away with His holy, precious blood. And the Holy Spirit would not give up until He had brought these blessings to our hearts and lives by His Word and sacraments. LORD, ***"your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep....With you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light."*** (Psalm 36:6,9 NIV)

✠ Light restored

This was no accident in the dark. It was all going down according to God's divine design, right by the book of His eternal plan. For Jesus was there as God when Light was first created. As the Holy Spirit says in John's Gospel: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it,"* and *"has not overcome it"* either. *"There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. [The Baptizer] came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth....From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* (John 1:1-17 NIV) Through His holy Word, in Person and in print, God has seen His **Light restored**.

Now *"live as children of light....Light makes everything visible. This is why says: 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."* (Ephesians 5:8,14-16 TPA) Did you suffer a job loss? Look in the light of God's Word and watch for His greater blessings, for *"we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28 KJV) Don't sit in the darkness of depression. In His light you now have more time to spend with your children or with friends and family. Maybe you can finally get in shape, especially as your soul basks in the sunshine of God's grace with healthy Bible study and worship. In the Light of Christ, keep pressing on to glory when our own eyes will see God's **Light restored** completely in heaven's eternal day. For now, we *Watch with Creation at the Cross* as willingly and victoriously the **Light Creator Suffers Darkness** in powerful, light-giving mercy and grace for you and me. *"Let there be light!"* – in Jesus' precious Name! Amen.