

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER
Easter Day

The Rev'd Warren E. Shaw, Rector

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the fifth Verse of the fourteenth Chapter of the Second Book of Moses, called Exodus.²

“And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth [*pye-huh-HYE-raath*], before Baalzephon [**BAY-ull ZEE-funn**].

“And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew [**SHOW**] to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

“And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

“And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea

St. Paul says, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

So now it’s up to you. If you look deep into your heart and see darkness and death, what will you do? Will you open your heart to receive the Word of God?

The Day of Judgment is also the day of salvation, and that day is today.

Alleleujah, Christ is risen!

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St. David’s Anglican Catholic Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

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¹ *The Table of Lessons*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxvii (Anglican Church of Canada 1962).

² Exodus 14:5-end (KJV).

³ St. John 20:11-23 (KJV).

⁴ St. John 1:5 (KJV).

after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the eleventh Verse of the twentieth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John.³

“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith **[SETH]** unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith **[SETH]** unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni [*ra-BOW-nye*]; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith **[SETH]** unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene [*magg-duh-LEE-knee*] came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst,

and saith [SETH] unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed [SHOWD] unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith [SETH] unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the first Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John: “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”⁴ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

Easter is not an isolated event. It has a context—a theological context and a biblical context. The Easter event was prefigured in the creation. It was predicted by the prophets. It was proclaimed by the Apostles. It will be consummated in the Day of Judgment and in the heart of every individual.

Throughout the Old Testament, judgment and death are associated with darkness. Three days of thick darkness was one of the plagues that God visited on Egypt to punish the Pharaoh for holding the Jews in slavery. Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah all foresee the coming Day of Judgment as a day of profound darkness. The darkness that fell over the earth on Good Friday represents that judgment.

Light, on the other hand, is associated with salvation and life. “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,” says Isaiah, “and thy healing shall spring forth speedily. Thy right-

eousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall follow thee.”

“The Lord shall enlighten my darkness,” says the Psalmist, and in another place, “Unto the upright, there ariseth light in the darkness.” The Bible begins with the unformed earth in a state of darkness. But the Spirit of God hovered over it. The Word of God entered in, and from the watery darkness emerged light and life.

In the Incarnation, the Christmas story, the same Spirit of God hovered over the Virgin Mary. The Word of God entered into the darkness of her womb, and from that darkness emerged light and life.

On Good Friday, the Word of God entered into the darkness of death, and, on Easter, light and life emerged from the tomb. It is as St. John says in the opening verses of his Gospel, “The light shined in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.”

The important thing for us is that the same Spirit that hovered over the unformed earth, and hovered over the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and hovered over the Cross, and hovered over the tomb, is hovering over this place right now.

The same Word of God that entered the darkness of the unformed earth and brought forth light, and entered the womb of the Virgin and brought forth life, and entered the darkness of death and brought forth light and life, that Word, the living Word of God, will also enter the darkness of every heart that is open today to receive Him and that will bring light out of that darkness and life out of death.

Hell is a place that God has set aside for those who will not receive His word. It is a place of darkness and everlasting death. There is no need for anyone to go there. Jesus already went there and broke down the gates.