

April 16, 2017 at Advent Lutheran Church in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. Easter Morning Worship Services. Mark 16:1-8; Matthew 28:1-10.

The Welsh poet, **Dylan Thomas** wrote in his poem, *Under Milk Wood*;

“To begin at the beginning...it is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobble – streets silent and the hunched, courtiers’ – and – rabbits’ wood limping invisible down to the sloe-black, slow black, crow black, fishing boat -bobbing sea.”

As usual, the poet and the artist captures with passion the realities and mysteries of life. If you know of **Dylan Thomas’** work, you know that it is by and large dark and deeply insightful as to the struggles and realities of the human condition.

It seems to be an **archetype**, to use **Jung's** term, that **darkness** is a **negative** and **light** a **positive**. That is borne out by popular culture as well as history. For example, both experience and literature tell us that many children are afraid of the dark. Maybe most people, regardless of age are afraid of the dark.

I certainly remember the gnawing feeling of **uncertainty** and **insecurity** of not being able to see in a dark space. Maybe our fear of the dark goes way back to when human beings, just beginning to emerge from their awakening within the evolutionary fog of pre-human existence looked around themselves and were astonished at what they saw.

A world that was **frightening** and **unpredictable**. Some days were warm and embracing while others were cruel and cold. The night, especially were frightening when all manner of beast could appear and take the life of someone near you or perhaps your life! No wonder it was frightening. No wonder that darkness earned the reputation of fear and uncertainty.

And cultures since then, most especially our own, with our history of slavery, violence and racism against African American people are a prime example. Dark, not always, but **often** meant a negative connotation. We talk about **"the dark side,"** connoting evil. **"You have entered darkness,"** usually meaning something sinister, or evil. When Jesus was crucified it was only 12:00 noon but as we know from scripture; **"Darkness covered the earth."** Dark or black has so permeated our culture so much that we have equated it with, and used it to describe that which is not only less than we are, but dangerous and to be avoided.

When we translate that into human terms we are doomed to repeat the violence of our savage past.

The **Easter story** of the **resurrection of Christ** does not begin in **Holy Week**, nor does it begin with Maundy Thursday, Good Friday or even with the story of the Resurrection of Christ. IT begins in Genesis;

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”

And continues with the next verse:

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light;’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

I know that the story of Easter begins here because the **Gospel of John**, in the New Testament makes that wonderful connection that affirms that it is true:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.”

You often hear me say that life does not begin at conception, that we, that is our spirit or soul, our true self comes from God and returns to God when this earthly life is over.

You also hear me say that God is not a separate being removed from our material and physical reality, but is indeed life itself. Being, breathing, living, existing – that is God. Not removed somehow from us like a super-power that is not a part of our life – **but is our life!**

John affirms this so beautifully in the next verse:

“What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

John's definition of God and Jesus is that they are life itself and came into being at creation. And they are not the exclusive property of Christian theology, community or ideology, but the energy that is life itself.

Our Lenten theme this year has been borrowed from my thesis on **Vincent van Gogh;**

"A journey From Darkness to Light."

I personally believe that within each human being there is a **need**, indeed a **hunger** and longing for God. **Van Gogh**, quite correctly equates that hunger with our human need for **love**. The practice of organized religion is only one of the ways that need can be **fed**, yet for many of God's children, as it was for him, it is the path to **darkness**.

The **artist**, the **musician**, the **poet**, the **writer** is often a better guide in our journey from **darkness to light**.

In the artist's words, that is **Vincent's** words;

"One of the roots or foundations, not only of the Gospel, but of the whole Bible is 'Light that rises in the darkness.'"

Vincent is right.

This year our takeaway from our **Easter** service is this enameled circle of **black** and **white**, our Easter theme. The symbol is the opposites of **black** and **white**, **light** and **darkness**, and yet they are not opposites, both are necessary for each one to be. This is expressed by **Yin and Yang** (pronounced **yong**) and is one of the most fundamental concepts in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), as it is the foundation of diagnosis and treatment.

The earliest reference to **Yin** and **Yang** is in approximately in **700 BC**. In this work, all phenomena are said to be reduced to **Yin-Yang**.

You can use the little medallion on a **key chain**, with your car keys or just put it somewhere where it will remind you of the interplay between darkness and light, the seeming opposites that are the sum-total of reality and a reminder that it is **light** that **wakes us up to life**, and it is light that reminds us of creation and the

breath of God that was breathed into Adam and Eve, the same breath of God that keeps you and me alive today!

To be alive is to be in God, and to be aware of that is to be born again!

CHRIST IS RISEN! (He is Risen Indeed!)

Amen.