

Darkness and death go together. Before Jesus breathed His last, the whole land was dark for three hours. And how strange was this darkness! From noon until three, when the sun should have been shining in all its strength, it became dark.

It was this way in the land of Egypt. Eight plagues had come and gone. And to no avail. And so God told Moses to stretch out his hand, and in all of Egypt there was pitch darkness. For three days no one rose from his place. Yet this plague, as with the others, did not move Pharaoh. Still, he refused to let God's people go. And so that which goes hand-in-hand with darkness followed...death. Every firstborn son in all of Egypt was killed by the angel of death.

When there is darkness, death will follow. As Jesus stretched out His hands on the cross, the land became dark. And so what followed the darkness was death. The death of the firstborn son. The Son of God and the Son of Mary. *"Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last."*

There is a reminder for us in the laying down of our head upon our pillow as we close our eyes and fall asleep. We are reminded, as the darkness of the night surrounds us, that for us too, death will follow the darkness. The time will come when our eyes will fall asleep for the last time.

We are mortals, and mortals will die. When our first parents disobeyed God, the whole world was plunged into darkness. Pitch darkness. A darkness that could be felt. So deep the darkness, that no one is able to rise from his place and find his way back to God.

Death is in our world for no other reason than this. Where there is darkness, there will be death. Death will come to all, for all have sinned, disobeying God.

But there is hope. And this hope is in Jesus Christ. As strange as it was for the whole land to be completely dark on Good Friday, even more strange was it for God to be hanging on a cross to die. What god of the pagans would do such a thing? Not only die, but die the cursed death of crucifixion. Die in the place of those who deserved to die.

This is your God. Your God loves sinners. Your God is merciful to sinners. Your God counted it all joy to enter our dark world and to suffer and die in our place. To die the death of the sinner. To be numbered with the transgressors. To be crushed for you and me. Jesus bore your sin and mine. And therefore, He has become light and life for us.

In the land of Goshen, God's people were not in darkness. In the land of Goshen, the blood of the lamb on the doorposts kept away the angel of death. All of Egypt faced darkness and death except for God's people. For them there was light and life.

You are God's people, for in your baptism the blood of the Lamb of God covers you now and always. And so you are not in darkness. Jesus is your light. Death cannot swallow you up forever. Jesus will raise you from your grave on the Last Day. Your sins cannot hold you in death forever because your sins are forgiven.

Do you doubt this? Then fix your eyes on Jesus. See His blood being shed on the cross for you. Hear Him say, *"Father, forgive."* Do not doubt but believe. God forgives you. Every one of you is forgiven.

To believe this is light and life in Christ. The light in which you now live, and the life that you have in Him forever. Amen.