

Easter Vigil 2017 John text. Standing in the light

Easter is Coming video.

https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=youtube+easter+is+coming

I love this video.

When read from one direction, it is a **statement of doubt**, from another, a **declaration of faith**.
Same words--different perspective.

We go from these words: *Easter is coming. But for many of us this is not the ultimate reality. There is too much pain in the world. Death has the last word. How can you say an empty tomb can change everything? Resurrection is a false hope.*

To these words: *God can give life to the dead, bring light from darkness and create something from nothing. God loves the world. Don't you see, an empty tomb changes everything? There is too much pain in the world. But this is not the ultimate reality. Easter is coming.*

Perspective can change everything.

Our Lenten Easter theme this year was **Stumbling in the dark; Dancing in the light.**

Throughout our Lenten journey we have explored the shadows of life and found ourselves stumbling, falling, fleeing, searching, wandering, turning, and eventually following in the darkness.

Tonight we stand in the light!

Light changes our perspective.

What once was ominous and threatening becomes promising and reassuring.

For John, the writer of this evening's gospel, Jesus is the light of the world,
The light that gives us new perspective.

Our worship tonight, the Easter vigil Service, is based on an **ancient liturgy of light that is tied to baptism.**

Traditionally it would begin late at night, as people gather around the glow of a bonfire.

Many scripture passages would be read, reviewing God's history of salvation.

Then moments before midnight, candidates for baptism would approach a large baptismal pool.

Hymns, prayers and candles would lead them into the baptismal waters.

On the other side of the pool, the newly baptized would step out, be given new clothes and finally be ushered through the doors of the church.

Once inside, they would meet the waiting congregation.

Together they would wait for the sunrise and then step into the new day, Easter Sunday and into their new lives as Christians.

Alleluias would be sung, as the light of this new day streamed in through the windows.

It must have been beautiful.

Tonight we began by lighting the Christ candle from the new fire outside.

Then, we lit candles, the same candles that we use at Christmas time, to celebrate that Jesus is the light of the world. As they added their glow to our sanctuary, we are reminded that the **light of Christ may push back all the dark shadows** and frightening threats of living in an imperfect world.

This is a new perspective. A resurrection perspective.

It is also a baptismal perspective.

In a few minutes we will baptize little Brooke Oriel.

In three splashes of water she will enter into Jesus' death and resurrection.

She will be marked with a cross of oil and given a baptismal candle and I will say the words: *Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

In baptism we are given a new perspective and a new identity.

We are now Easter people. We remember the words: *If we die with Him in a death like his, then we most certainly will rise with Him in a resurrection like his.*

We may look the same after baptism, we may even feel the same but the truth is that we are different. We've entered into Christ's salvation story and been touched by the Easter light.

Everything after that is changed and we have been made a member of God's family and given the family name—Christian.

We have been given a new perspective.

Easter is coming.

This is the good news of the gospel. Amen