

*4John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

*9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

At this time would you join me in singing the first half of the first verse of hymn #400

God whose almighty word, chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight.

What is that about?

"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."

Did you hear that? a formless void - chaos - and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light and there was light."

Chaos and darkness heard God's word - Let there be light- and took their flight. The picture in Genesis 1 is of chaos and darkness existing and God creating by pushing back chaos and darkness that there might be a place for light and life - all this through God's word.

God spoke. There was light where before had been only chaos and darkness.

We call it creation.

Creation happens still, wherever there is faith.

A woman comes to this place, to this gathering. Her heart is full of bitterness, sorrow, guilt, disappointment, anger, regret, a great sea of emotion churning within. Chaos, Darkness. He had pledged himself to her for life, he left her for another.

She hears God's word through the prophet Isaiah: "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off; do not fear for I am with you, do not be afraid for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

She hears this word of God, she believes. And now in her it is as if God were saying: "Let there be light." And there is light.

Death has come. A family gathers. All the order and sense in their lives have been thrown into disorder, chaos, darkness by death. Never before have her children lived in this world without her, never

before have her grandchildren lived in a world where she was not. For as long as he can remember her husband has rested beside her each night, awakened to her smile. Now nothing is right in the world.

They hear God's word: Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me, even though they die shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

They believe what Jesus speaks and it is as if God said, "Let there be light," and there is light.

He thought his parents would never find out, but now they know. He'd been caught doing what they had forbid him ever to do. All the bright sparkling lights of his adventure had been snuffed out, friends were nowhere near, trust his parents had had in him was no more. He had disobeyed God.

He kneels in confession, he prays for a new beginning, a fresh start with God, with his parents.

He hears God's word: "As an ordained minister of the church of Christ and by his authority I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins." That young man believes this word of God.

Then later in the service God's word is spoken once more, now by different voices - his father, his mother: "Peace be with you." He believes this word as well.

God is saying, "Let there be light," and there is light, light now where there had been only darkness, chaos, division."

"God whose almighty word, chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight, hear us we humbly pray and where the Gospel day sheds not its glorious ray, Let there be light."

Where God's word is absent, there is only chaos and darkness. But when you hear God's word, you are God's new creation.

Genesis one, the account of creation is not just about way back then, but is about your life, here and now. God speaks and you hear, and you are the new creation.

Or you do not hear, you live by your own wisdom and strength, you depend on yourself for all you need from day to day, and soon there is only darkness and chaos, despair, fear, division.

In our homes and in our communities and in our hearts, when we hear God's word and believe there is light. The light that is Christ is called into being in you when you believe.

Paul writes: "If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation, everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new!"

When Jesus was baptized, see him go under those waters. Like God's people Israel fleeing all the chaos and darkness of Egypt passing through the Red Sea. Now see all the chaos and darkness following, chariots and soldiers of Pharaoh, ready to punish and enslave God's children. Now watch those waters flow in upon them, drown the enemies, every enemy.

Now see yourself passing through those waters with Jesus, protected by the mighty word of God. See all sin and death, all darkness and chaos, all evil and despair destroyed as you emerge from those waters in faith.