

Genesis 1:14–19  
Wed. of Oculi (Lent III)  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
March 15, 2023

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.*

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

This evening we consider the fourth day of creation, when God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. You will recall how God created light on day one, separating the light from the darkness, the day from the night. So for three days there was no sunrise and sunset, no waxing and waning of the moon, no constellations to behold. For three days the light and the darkness remained indistinct. Just imagine, day and night without the regular goings on of the sun, moon, and stars. As we go through the days of creation, you’ll notice how days one, two, and three correspond to days four, five, and six. On day one, God created light. On the fourth day, God organized that light and created vessels for the light in the sun, moon, and stars. On the second day, the waters above and below were separated, making the atmosphere, or the sky. On the fifth, the Lord will fill the firmament, the sky, with birds, and the water with fish. On the third day, God made the dry land appear. On the sixth day, God will then create animals and man to inhabit that dry land. Days four, five, and six correspond to days one, two, and three. Our God is a God of order.

Our God is also a God who uses means, or instruments, to accomplish what He sets out to do. God created all things by the means of the Word. The sun, moon, and stars serve as means of carrying light, vehicles of the light already created. Think of any light source. On its own, the light source is there, but without means we can hardly use it. A light bulb works fine by itself, if it's connected to a source of electricity, but it really needs a lamp to raise it up so the whole room can be illuminated and a lampshade so the light isn't blinding. Or think of fire, which by itself is perfectly capable of giving off light. It's much easier and safer, though, if that flame works through means, like a wick, a wax candle, and a candle holder so you can safely carry that flame to give light. Without means, or vehicles to transmit the light, an open flame would be quite dangerous. The sun, moon, and stars are such vehicles or instruments, means by which created light is mediated to us.

God Himself dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16), which is why our LORD always has to mediate His presence for His people. Without a mediator, a go-between, we would experience all too well that our God is "a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). That's why the Angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in a burning bush that was not consumed. God is a consuming fire, but He comes to us in ways that we sinners can handle. Even there at the burning bush, Moses "hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Ex 3:6). Later, God said to Moses: "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Ex 33:20). Yet in Jesus Christ, we behold the face of God. In Jesus Christ, the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And so John continues: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known." The only way we can approach the holy God of the universe is because that holy God of the universe has come to us as the man Jesus Christ. The supernatural God comes to us in

ways that we can grasp Him—in the man, Jesus Christ, in the written Word of God, in Holy Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper—the Lord always conceals Himself so we can literally grasp Him by faith. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim 2:5–6). As the sun mediates light, so does Jesus mediate God’s presence to us.

In discussing the creation of light on day one, we noted that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome (John 8:12; 1:5). But Jesus is not only called the light; He is also called the Sun. Malachi 4, the last chapter of the Old Testament, says: “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.” The work of the sun can either be destructive or restorative. The sun burns up and withers the plants of the field. But the sun also provides the light and the warmth needed for life to thrive. For those outside of and apart from Christ, our Lord is a consuming fire. That’s why Hell is described as an unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43). For those inside Christ however, those who are a part of Christ, or members of His Body, the Church, by way of baptism and faith, our LORD is a healing and life-giving fire. Jesus is the sun of righteousness. His power to heal and to forgive comes out of Him like the rays of the sun and we come into His presence to bask in His life-giving light.

Besides mediating light to the earth and separating day from night, the sun, moon, and stars were also created to serve us as signs. Some have taken this to mean that our destinies are written in the stars, or that we can tell the future by reading astrological charts and understanding the zodiac and the phases of the moon. Man’s natural religion—man’s sinful default worship—is

to look above him to the sun, moon, and stars for guidance. Even God's people in the Old Testament turned to these sinful practices, worshiping the creation rather than the creator (2 Kings 21:3; Rom 1:25). Yet our LORD clearly renounces these practices. The LORD says of astrologers through the prophet Isaiah: "You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame" (47:13–14). Trusting in the stars rather than in the God who made the stars is a form of idolatry, which leads to unquenchable fire.

The sun, moon, and stars were not created to guide our lives or reveal hidden things to us. Yet they were created to serve as signs. We know it is day when the sun shines and we know it is night when the moon and the stars appear. Each season has its distinctive constellations, several of which are mentioned in Scripture. In the book of Job, both Job and God mention the Bear (that's *Ursa Major*, which includes the Big Dipper), and Orion, and the Pleiades (Job 9:9; 38:31–32). Jesus talks about common celestial signs, for example, "red sky at night, sailor's delight." Jesus says: "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times" (Matt 16:3). The sky warns us of what's to come, both naturally and supernaturally, leading us to repent of our sins when we realize that the world is passing away (1 John 2:17).

We are reminded of the signs in the heavens that point to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a star that led the magi from the East to the Christ Child, a star foretold in the book of Numbers [24:17]: "I see him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a star shall come out of

Jacob.” Jesus calls Himself “the bright morning star” (Rev 22:16), the one who rises in our hearts (2 Pet 1:19) and leads us to the Father. The sun was darkened when the light of the world was snuffed out on Good Friday, and at the end of time, Jesus reminds us what the prophets foretold (Is. 13:9–1; Joel 2:31; 3:15): “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt 24:29–30).

When the Day of the Lord comes, “the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Pet 3:10). Then our LORD will take us to be with Him in the new heavens and the new earth, to the eternal city that “has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev 21:23). We, the servants of the Lord, will worship at the throne of God and of the Lamb. We will see Him face to face and night will be no more. We will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be our light, and we will reign with Him forever and ever (Rev 22:3–5). Until that day, we praise the LORD for giving us the sun, moon, and stars to give light on the earth and to serve as signs, ever pointing us to the creator of all things, who comes to recreate us in His Son, Jesus Christ, our LORD. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Magnificat.