

# The Feast of St. Matthew

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] In the baptismal liturgy that we just witnessed, we light a candle and we give it to the newly baptized or the parents or godparents.
- ! And this light represents what we received in holy baptism. The early church referred to baptism as illumination.
- In other words, we were brought out of darkness of sin and death, and we were illumined with the light of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit through water, which is the physical means or the instrument by which God meets us.
- Just as God took upon flesh to meet us here on earth, so he connects to the physical means of water to wash us, to cleanse us from sin, where he imparts life and light to us.
- The emphasis on light fills the scriptures from beginning to end. We read in Genesis chapter 1 that the Lord says, Let there be light. And that light invaded the darkness and the void, separating day from night. Chaos gave way to the beauty of creation.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ] We read how Israel was led by a fire at night as the people of God made their way out of Egypt through the wilderness.
- This fire harkened back to the burning bush that Moses encountered, which is the way that the Lord met and commissioned his servant Moses to lead the children of Israel.
- The glory of the Lord was manifested in radiant light, which we read about when Moses went up to Mount Sinai and he encountered God. He received the law of God, the Ten Commandments.
- This radiant light is described by Isaiah and Ezekiel as they were gripped with visions of our Lord. The theme of light continues as we read how the Magi were led to the birthplace of the Savior by a marvelous light called a star in the sky.
- We read of a beaming light in both the baptism and the transfiguration of our Lord. At Pentecost, we read how the Holy Spirit descended upon people like flames of fire.
- [ 2 : 3 1 ] And at the end of scripture, we read in Revelation chapter 22, verses 4 and 5, how the people of God behold the Lamb, Jesus, who has overcome Satan and his demonic forces as we read the following.
- They shall see his, that is Jesus, they shall see his face and his name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no light, no night there.
- They need no lamp, nor light of the sun. For the Lord gives them light and they shall reign with him forever and ever. This is just a cursory glance of this theme of light throughout scripture.
- But the point is, is that all baptized Christians now participate in this uncreated light, which is the light of God himself.
- You see, we just witnessed again, little Reese receiving the life and the light of God this morning as he was washed and as he was cleansed from sin.
- [ 3 : 4 6 ] And he was claimed by God. He is now a child of God. Little Reese has been illumined with this uncreated light, which is the grace of God.

In our epistle text, we heard those words from St. Paul here in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3 through 6. St. Paul writes, St. Paul says,

St. Paul's reference to the veil here harkens back to the days of Moses. As Moses came down from Mount Sinai after receiving the law of God, the people could not look upon Moses' face because it radiated with this uncreated light from God.

They had to veil themselves or cover their eyes due to this light of God that reflected from Moses.

In the same way, those who reject God because they have made their own intellects, their own emotions, or who have become mindless sheep following the spirit of this age, the influencers and the cultural icons that we worship, such people that follow these people now have a veil over their hearts and minds so that they do not and they will not believe.

[ 6 : 06 ] Their hearts are heartened. Their hearts are heartened. Their minds are darkened to the things of God. They have a veil that remains over their face.

But the God who brought order out of chaos, the God who commanded light from darkness, is the God who causes little Reese and all of us to now share in this uncreated light and to partake of his grace.

This veil has been removed so that we now possess the light and life of Jesus. And we are called to grow, to seek after this light, so that darkness becomes less and less of who we are.

And the light of God is overtaking us and then extending outward to others. And on this day that we celebrate the Feast of St. Matthew, that is exactly what happened to this great saint.

Matthew was a tax collector, which means he was not involved in a profession that promoted honesty. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, tax collectors worked for the Roman Empire.

[ 7 : 23 ] They were hated by the Jewish people. They took great liberty in inflating the amount owed by the people to the government. So, tax collectors were not only hated, they were also seen as thieves, as they would take kickbacks, or they would hold back a portion for themselves of what they collected.

But after Matthew, the tax collector, encountered Jesus, he left his shady business, and by the way, a rather lucrative career, and he became a follower of Jesus, not lucrative at all.

And this St. Matthew records those, our Lord's words in his gospel. St. Matthew chapter 5 in verses 14 and 16 that says, You are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. This uncreated light of God is what little Reese, and all of us who are baptized into Christ, it's what we've received.

We are called to now allow this light to grow. We are called to allow it to grow in us and to seek after the light of God in a world that is very dark.

[ 9 : 02 ] And this happens when we do not follow the world and its temporal pleasures that causes darkness to slowly overtake us. But it's when we follow Christ.

Because Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.