

Good Friday: Tenebrae (Service of Shadows)

This past Friday it was Good Friday. As the weekend was approaching I had a sudden urge to experience a service that was a bit more traditional than I am normally accustomed to, and so I decided to look around for any Churches that were having liturgical services in my area. This year I really wanted to avoid just thinking of Easter on "the day of" yet only scarcely thinking of it before or after that glorious Sunday. And since I do not attend a Church that observes Lent I do not have much opportunity to observe that in a congregational setting, and I really wanted to dive deeper and meditate on Easter (better yet: Resurrection Sunday), as well as the entire season leading up to Resurrection Sunday, to reverently respect what Christ did for me.

So after looking around I ended up attending a night service at a nearby Lutheran Church where they held a very reverent and moving Good Friday "Service of Shadows" (**Tenebrae**), where candles are lit at the beginning of the service and messianic prophecies (from the Psalms and Isaiah) of Christ's suffering and judgment on our behalf, in order to purchase our atonement, are read. After each passage is read one candle is put out and the lights are dimmed a little more. There was also about half a minute of silent reflection for the congregation after each scripture was read and the flame was extinguished.

The message given in the middle of the service was on Christ's sufficiency and being all-in-all as the Alpha and Omega, as being everything that we need and the only way to eternal life. By the end of the service the entire sanctuary was dark and one candle remained shining. Then there was a closing hymn and also a moment for silent meditation on Christ's sacrifice, and then everyone left the darkened sanctuary in *complete silence* while thinking on Christ's great sacrifice and love for us.

What an experience! So different from noisy sanctuaries with background music as you walk out and feel-good messages. It is sometimes good to soberly reflect on what the Lord has done for us and to bow our hearts before Him. Yet strangely, if you do, it will warm your heart even more and increase your awe and reverence for the great and loving God whom we serve, and who gave His life up for us.

