

If you have been to a live performance at a theater, a play or a show of some kind where you sit as a spectator with the audience, and your attention is directed toward the stage, then you are familiar with the curtain. Before the performance begins, the curtain is closed. But when the curtain is lifted, the show gets under way. As long as the curtain remains open, the show continues. But as soon as the curtain drops, it has come to the end.

In a way, Shakespeare was right when he wrote: "All the world's a stage." And we must go back, as far as we can – the first verses in Genesis, to arrive at the time when the curtain was fully in place covering the entire stage. "*The earth was without form and void,*" we read, "*and darkness was over the face of the deep.*" Before the stage was set, before God began to create the world, there was a curtain; it was the curtain of darkness; and it covered everything.

But then the curtain was lifted as God spoke His creation into existence. "*Let there be light!*" And from that moment on, the curtain of darkness had no power over the light of the sun. It could only rule at night.

Until Golgotha. Until twelve o'clock noon on a Friday, the sixth hour, when Jesus was hanging from a cross. Exactly at that moment the curtain fell. Darkness covered the whole land, the sun's light failing, we read. And this curtain of darkness remained in place for three hours until Jesus was dead.

How are we to understand this? How do the people there on Golgotha understand it? Without warning, in the middle of the day when the sun is at its brightest, it becomes as dark as night. An eclipse? No. This is the time of the Passover which is when the moon is full. The moon, therefore, would not be able to block the light of the sun. The people would have stood in stunned silence, for three hours the darkness surrounding them. And then, at the very end of it, at three o'clock, they hear Jesus shout this cry: "*Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit!*" And His head drops to His chest.

How are we to understand all of this? Here is how. The show is over. The performance has come to the end. The curtain has dropped. The curtain of darkness, which was lifted back in the beginning, has fallen.

Rather than cheering, however, and applauding the performance, the people leave Golgotha beating their breasts. This spectacle, this show as the Greek puts it, moves them to deep sorrow. What are they to think other than that creation itself has become unglued? The darkness for three hours, and as Jesus cries out and dies the earth shakes and rocks are split, writes St. Matthew. "What is happening to our world!" the people might well be thinking.

And indeed, they should think this. Because it's over. The show is over. The curtain has dropped on God's creation. As Jesus dies, all of creation dies with Him.

The old creation, that is. Oh, we still see it and live in it. But it's in the dying process. And these signs are all around us. Wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and other disasters, stars falling from the heavens. With Jesus' death, the curtain fell on God's creation. It's over, and it's dying. But...But with Jesus' resurrection, a new creation is begun!

Now when the curtain drops in a theater, the stage hands work feverishly behind the curtain to reset the stage. And so, when the curtain is lifted once again, the audience sees that the stage is new and different from how it was before.

And so, on Golgotha, after the curtain fell, God was working to put everything in place for the new creation. And then, on Easter morning, the curtain is raised as the stone is rolled away from the tomb. And it's a new day, yes, a new creation. God has replaced the old stage with a new one. Gone are the nails, and the thorns, and the bleeding, and the dying. Gone are all our sins with all their punishments – buried forever in Jesus' tomb. All these are in the past. These are part of the old creation. And on Easter morning, Jesus' resurrection brings to light the new creation in which there is grace, forgiveness, and life; these giving peace, joy, and hope.

And now I ask you – are you in the old creation or in the new creation? In the old there is sin, punishment, and death. But the curtain fell on all of that. Who would want to still be a part of that old, dying creation?

Oh, but we cling to it, don't we? We cling to this dying world. We cling to our selfish lusts. But in clinging to our sinful ways, not wanting to give them up, we are clinging to that which is dead and dying.

The curtain must fall on us, too. We must repent and turn away from our sin so that God can reset the stage within us; so that we die to sin and are raised to life with our Lord.

And here it is, this good news, in 2 Corinthians 5: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation! The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!"*

This is you, my friends. This is what your baptism has done for you. Your baptism places you in Christ. And if anyone is *in Christ, he is a new creation!*

Oh, you still sin, sins of weakness because we are weak. And your body will die and be laid in a grave. But because you are the new creation in Christ, there is forgiveness for you in Jesus. And there is life, eternal life for you with Him.

The new creation in Christ will never end. The curtain can never fall on it. That temple curtain is no more. It was ripped in two with Jesus' death. And for you this means, the curtain of darkness cannot now, nor ever, fall upon you who are in Christ as His new creation. Amen.