

Quotes for the Week

The Old Testament begins with darkness, and the last of the Gospels ends with it. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," Genesis says. Darkness was where it all started. Before darkness, there had never been anything other than darkness, void and without form. At the end of John, the disciples go out fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. It is night. They have no luck. Their nets are empty. Then they spot somebody standing on the beach. At first they don't see who it is in the darkness. It is Jesus.

The darkness of Genesis is broken by God in great majesty speaking the word of creation. "Let there be light!" That's all it took. The darkness of John is broken by the flicker of a charcoal fire on the sand. Jesus has made it. He cooks some fish on it for his old friends' breakfast. On the horizon there are the first pale traces of the sun getting ready to rise.

All the genius and glory of God are somehow represented by these two scenes, not to mention what Saint Paul calls God's foolishness. The original creation of light itself is almost too extraordinary to take in. The little cookout on the beach is almost too ordinary to take seriously. Yet if Scripture is to be believed, enormous stakes were involved in them both, and still are. Only a saint or a visionary can begin to understand God setting the very sun on fire in the heavens, and therefore God takes another tack. By sheltering a spark with a pair of cupped hands and blowing on it, the Light of the World gets enough of a fire going to make breakfast. It's not apt to be your interest in cosmology or even in theology that draws you to it so much as it's the empty feeling in your stomach. You don't have to understand anything very complicated. All you're asked is to take a step or two forward through the darkness and start digging in.

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*How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!
therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of thy wings.*

Psalm 36:7