

ECLIPSE

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Two weeks ago, we here in Middle Tennessee were extraordinary fortunate to experience a relatively rare astronomical event—a solar eclipse. Although the entire country was able to view at least a partial eclipse, here in Wilson County we were blessed to be within the 70-mile-wide band of totality. We witnessed a total eclipse of the sun. In Lebanon, at 1:30 in the afternoon on August 21, the sun was blocked out by the moon for 2 minutes 34.6 seconds. In those few moments, the sky went black, stars and planets appeared, the cicadas made their cicada noises.

Although I knew exactly what was happening, it was still disconcerting for the sun to disappear like that in the middle of the day. The sun provides the fuel for life on our planet. Plants use the sun to create food. The rest of us depend on those plants for energy and oxygen. The power of the sun creates our weather, it moves the oceans, and so much more. The idea of the sun not being there is simply unthinkable.

On Wednesday of this week when we learned that Catherine Batcheler had died, our world went dark—as dark as a total eclipse. But unlike the eclipse, this darkness will never fully go away. Yes, our lives will get brighter bit by bit, but for some us, we shall live in the darkness of Catherine's death for a very, very long time.

Catherine was a light in this church. She sang in the choir. She performed the flute for us in worship. Mr. Clark, our choir director, spoke to Catherine on Sunday about performing a piece at Christmas.

Catherine was a light in our community. You always knew when Catherine was around. Her laugh announced her presence to a room. She never hesitated to share her opinion. Catherine loved her friends. She told me them – all the time. She loved her family—especially her siblings. She loved her music, and she had the talent and drive to sustain that love.

It is because of Catherine's passion for music that the choir has chosen to sing today the hymn *How Can I Keep From Singing*. Listen carefully to the words as they are sung.

We are here today because we miss Catherine. It is hard to believe she is gone. We all just saw her. I saw her on Saturday. She was here at the church. We had a wedding and she volunteered to turn pages for our organist. On Sunday, she was in the choir and I spoke with her. It is impossible to think that she won't be there in the choir tomorrow. Or won't be at school next week, or at band practice, or any

other place we might find ourselves. As that realization sinks in, our hearts will break and the darkness will overshadow us.

In the church, our belief is in life eternal—life won for us through sacrifice and resurrection. Our God has the power to defeat death. Life is not meaningless, life is not pointless, life is a gift of God—a gift to be treasured. When life ends we grieve, but our tears today flow with the confidence that Catherine is with her Lord. This is the promise of the resurrection.

Last week, as we watched the eclipse, we did so wearing those goofy, cardboard glasses. At the moment of totality, we were able to remove the glasses and for a moment look with our bare eyes. We were surprised to see the flowing, white ring in the sky where the sun had been. It was beautiful.

Catherine's life is like that. Even in the dreadful darkness of her death, she shines brightly above us. She always will. I encourage you in the coming days and weeks to share your stories with one another—to laugh, to cry, to remember. I cannot explain Catherine's death to you. I have no answers. It is a terrible moment when a young life is lost. But Catherine will always have a place in our lives. She is a radiant light in God's heaven. She will always shine. The words from the gospel of John are appropriate here: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*