

Sometimes words are not enough, Joel Gregory and Ralph West insist

November 11, 2015

FRISCO—When words are not enough and language reaches its limit, Christians enter into Christ’s suffering and death through the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper, two prominent preachers reminded Texas Baptists.

During a worship service at the [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#) annual meeting, Texas Baptists gathered to take, eat and remember Jesus Christ, after pulpiteers Joel Gregory and Ralph West invited them to reflect on the times “when words are not enough.”

The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper “is not just a mental exercise in intellectual dexterity,” said West, founding pastor of [The Church Without Walls in Houston](#). “It’s also a proclamation. Tonight, we will re-enact that redemptive drama, and we will recall in sign and symbol when words are not enough to remember what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on Calvary.”

West and Gregory walked through the account of the Lord’s Supper and pivotal moments throughout Good Friday—breaking bread, sharing the cup, snuffing out the sun and the tearing of the temple veil.

Gregory, professor of preaching and evangelism at Baylor University’s [Truett Theological Seminary](#), preached that in the darkness that swallowed up the sun on the day of Christ’s crucifixion, “nature, as if in sympathy, turned out the lights.”

“G.Campbell Morgan, the famed English Bible expositor, supposed that this hour all of the demonic forces of darkness in the cosmos gathered around the hill of Calvary because they sensed this was going to be the moment of their greatest victory,” Gregory said. “And yet, the Gospel of John says, ‘The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it.’”

Darkness on Sinai

West expounded upon the theological meaning of this midday darkness, saying this moment reaches back in history, alluding to the darkness Moses entered to receive the law.

“Ominous and dark was Mount Sinai,” West said. “The people stood at a distance, and Moses went into the thickness with God. You see, Sinai was symbolic of the law. Sinai was symbolic of our weakness, our frailty, our limitations, our mortality, our inability to face the divine.

“To go to Sinai is to go into the thick veil of darkness. Sinai leaves us in darkness. How many times have I heard people glibly say, ‘I’m living by the Ten Commandments.’ Well, I can tell you this: if you are, you’re living condemned and frustrated.”

“There’s something unjustifiable about just living by the Ten Commandments,” he continued. “Someone had to go into that darkness. Someone had to move into the veil of that thickness. Someone had to go where no man had ever gone before, and that someone is the Lord Jesus Christ.”

By entering into darkness, Christ fulfilled the law, defeated sin and death for all eternity and ushered in a new covenant in his blood. This massive shift in humanity’s relationship to God was marked by tearing the temple veil from top to bottom.

Rending of the temple veil

Rending the veil didn't "let God out" of the temple, Gregory said. Rather, it was torn to signal that people can enter and access God personally. In that moment in history, one of the most significant Baptist distinctives of all was born, he and West noted.

"Until that moment, the priesthood was limited," West added. "It belonged to one gender, and one tribe, and one place, and one time. One of the most precious Baptist distinctives was born on that very day—that you and I are part of the priesthood of all believers.

"At that moment, we didn't have to belong to the tribe of Levi, didn't have to be male, didn't have to go to the temple, didn't have to happen at a certain time of the day or certain time of year. Access had been opened because that veil had been torn from top to bottom."

The work of the temple priests always was meant to point to "a coming of somebody who would do what all of them had intended," Gregory said. That somebody is Christ, and because of that, Christians take, eat and remember, he said.