

The Great Vigil of Easter  
Genesis 1:1-2:4a  
Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18, 8:6-18, 9:8-13  
Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21  
Luke 24:1-12  
March 26, 2016

In the Name of the One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We have just heard ancient stories. Stories of chaos, waters, breath, holiness, sin, floods, signs, slavery, seas, death, freedom. Through these stories we see how people centuries ago – many centuries – tried to understand, capture and convey great mysteries:

Who are we? Who are we in relation to our ancestors and our neighbors? Who are we in relation to our history? Who are we in relation to our sin? Who are we in relation to our God?

We are, of course, still trying to figure these things out and we mine our own experiences, history, and relationships in order to come to an understanding of who we are. We find some answers – through thoughts, dreams, study, conversation.

And we find answers in these ancient stories and the truths woven therein. We learn of God's love for us, we learn of our identity as God's children, God's chosen. We learn of the unrelenting love of God for us, the boundless generosity of God – always giving himself over and over again to us, always risking – and experiencing rejection – and always calling us back into his life and love, his justice, his mercy, his freedom, his dream for us.

However, knowledge of God's love for us can't solely be attained through our hearing, our thinking, our remembering.

We have to feel the history and the relationships. We have to enter into the chaos, the flood, the seas – we need to be buried, need to enter into darkness and we need to rise into light.

This evening we are baptizing a baby and an adult, Georgia and Brenda, into new life. They will enter into the waters of baptism and feel the warm water wash over them, drip down their faces. They will feel oil on their heads. And feel the embrace of their faith community. We too will feel the water wash over us. As it falls on you, resist the temptation to wipe it away.

Stay in the moment. This entire vigil moves us from darkness into light, from death into life, from grave to glory. We will experience this movement together, in community. We will all feel the waters of chaos, flood, and freedom fall upon us. Let these waters wash you.

Take a moment to enter into the waters of chaos. They are dark, untamed, swirling, boundless. They are at once terrifying and generative.

Take a moment to stand in the ark as flood waters rush around you, carrying you off course, if there was a course at all. These waters, like the waters at the beginning of time, are deep and terrifying, there is death and destruction all around. But there is promise on the horizon.

Take a moment to enter into the waters of the Red Sea, fleeing all that has imprisoned you, bound you, kept you in your place, kept you small and defeated.

Take a moment and enter into the tomb with Jesus. It is dark. Let the darkness encircle you. It is quiet. Let the quietness enfold you. Remain there with the one who has experienced both the terror and the promise, has in fact transformed the terror into promise.

Now, look up as the stone is rolled away.

Leave the darkness and the terror.

Leave the tomb, dark and quiet like a womb, and then break through the waters into light and new life.

Embrace the victory of justice over privilege, love over hate, abundance over scarcity, heaven over earth, light over darkness, honor over shame, life over death.

And now live it.

Live your alleluias.

Live like you just emerged from the waters of creation.

Live like you just emerged from the ark of promise.

Live like you just emerged from all that enslaves you.

Live like you just emerged from the darkness of the tomb.

Live your alleluias.

Live like you just emerged from the womb of God, you have been given new life in Christ.

Live your alleluias.

Live like your baptism means something – just this – that you have been buried with Christ and are raised with him.

Live the vows you make or renew this night.

Live justice.

Live dignity.

Live peace.

Live promise.

Live witness.

Live love.

Live free.

Live, sing, and claim your Easter Alleluias.

Amen.