

## Out of Darkness, Light

Out of darkness, God brings light. Out of darkness and destruction and death, God brings light and creativity and life.

That is the theme we proclaim all through our Great Vigil of Easter tonight. That is the theme we began when we kindled new fire outside and lit the Paschal Candle and processed into the darkened church and chanted to honor “The Light of Christ.” That is the theme proclaimed in each of our readings from the centuries-long story of our salvation history. Again and again tonight we have heard how God enters a place of darkness and we praise God for bringing forth light.

In the story of the Flood, we heard how, out of the waters of destruction, God brought a new beginning. Out of the flood sent to wash the world clean from sin, God brought Noah and his family and the animals, to re-create the earth. God brings us through water also: through baptism we are cleansed from sin and given a new beginning in life with the Lord. God keeps covenant with us, not to destroy sin in our world, not to destroy sin in us, but to do something new: to forgive sin and redeem sin and transform sin and to bring even out of sin the first steps toward a new creation. We gather tonight to celebrate water, and to praise God for new beginnings.

In the story of Abraham and Isaac, we heard how, out of the threat of loss, God brought promise. Out of the bondage of Isaac, God brought the vision of blessing for all the peoples of the earth. God had promised Abraham land and blessing and descendants—and the whole promise hinged on Isaac, Isaac the miracle-child of Abraham and Sarah’s old age, Isaac the child God had demanded in the ancient rite of the sacrifice of the firstborn. Abraham was caught in a terrible dilemma: the ritual demanded he sacrifice his son; the promise demanded he love and protect and raise his son. Abraham saw no way out—until God provided the way, until God changed the ritual, and Isaac was spared, and the promise was renewed. We too look to God to provide, to provide meaning for our sacrifices in the sacrifice of Jesus, to provide for us the way to renewed hope. We gather tonight to celebrate the true sacrifice, and to praise God for the promise.

In the story of the Exodus, we heard how, out of bondage, God brought deliverance. Out of slavery, out of the threat of pharaoh’s army, out of the depths of the Red Sea, God brought the People into victory and safety and freedom. We, too, have passed through the waters into freedom: through baptism we are freed from the tyranny of sin and death, and are made members of the people of Christ. And so we sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. We gather tonight to celebrate the end of bondage, and to praise God for our deliverance in Christ.

In the story of the dry bones, we heard how, out of despair, God brought hope. Out of Israel’s exile in Babylon, God brought release. Out of the dryness, the desiccation, the deadness of the bones that were Ezekiel’s vision of the whole house of Israel, God brought first the skeleton, then the flesh, then the skin, and at last the breath of life. God can always put together whatever has fallen apart. So we bring to God *our* dry bones, *our* brokenness; and God opens our graves, and God puts into us his spirit, and God breathes into us his breath. We gather tonight to celebrate the opening of the grave, and to praise God for hope.

And finally, ultimately, in the Resurrection Gospel, we heard how, out of death, God brought life. Out of the cold and darkness of the tomb, the new tomb in the garden where no one had ever yet been buried, the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid and was laid no more—out of the darkness of the tomb God brought light and life and love. This is the point the whole story has been building to—

the story that began in Creation, the story that wound its way through slavery and freedom, through sin and forgiveness, through failure and promise, the story that comes right down to us here tonight. Out of the death of Jesus, God brought resurrection, and in Jesus' resurrection the whole world is made new. That is the story we have to tell, the story we celebrate tonight.

And of course the story doesn't end here. In a very real way, the good news of this Gospel is just the beginning. Because now we know that the power of death is broken, now we know that our lives are raised up into Christ's life, now we can walk in newness of life, now we can consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, now we can take our part in God's work to make the whole Creation new. That is the Easter story; that story is *our* story, and we tell it tonight, and tomorrow, and every day of our lives.

We gather tonight to celebrate resurrection, and to praise God for LIFE.

Alleluia! Amen.