The Great Vigil of Easter All Saints’ Church

March 26, 2016 Year C

The Story of Creation

The Story of Israel’s Deliverance at the Red Sea

The Valley of Dry Bones

Romans 6:3-11

Luke 24:1-12

Good News- God creates out of chaos. God flings the stars to the ends of the world, creates the sun and the moon, brings forth fishes and fowls, beasts and birds to soar and seek and then lovingly creates humankind, like a key into the lock of creation in which we learn to love and live. Good news- God can step into the tangled webs of the chaos of our lives, even today, and bring us into a new creation.

More Good News- God makes a way out of no way. God takes an oppressed people born into slavery and breaks open a path for them to walk to freedom. Good news- the pharaohs of our world, today, who are abusive, addicted, angry and obsessive, who use the rhetoric of power and privilege to ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others are tossed into the sea.

Even More Good News- God provides us with new hope by raising up our dry and brittle bones. Oh Son of Man, can these bones live? Indeed, yes, and not only live, but dance and sing and eat and drink and be merry and believe again in a future laced with fierce love. Good news- in a world where carpenters get resurrected, anything is possible.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and all the other women walk to the tomb taking the spices they had prepared to anoint Jesus’ body- to give him a proper burial, to cleanse him and to wrap him lovingly with a shroud to cover his broken and bruised body. I imagine they are crying and praying and holding hands, as they walk to the tomb. And yet, instead of a stone, they find a gaping hole at the entrance of the tomb and as they walk in, they find no body. While they are perplexed by this…… two men in dazzling clothes stand beside them. They are terrified and bow their faces to the ground.

We need to stop here, and pretend we don’t know the end of the story. They are terrified, and like Moses, in the face of holy ground, they take off their shoes, by submitting to the ground of all being- the impossible is descending upon them. God’s ways are not their ways. The tomb has become a new universe. They bow their faces to the ground, trembling. What will be next?

“Why do you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has been raised. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again?”

The tomb has become a womb.

This is our faith. That dying, no matter how or when or why that takes place, we will rise with Christ, so that we too might walk in newness of life. Death no longer has dominion over us.

This dying thing, this letting go and letting God, this openness to vulnerability, this surrender, this still silence, this placing one’s head on the ground in total submission seems to be a pattern in all of scripture. It’s easy to find if you look for it.

Women are barren, men are fearful, a favored son is sold into slavery, a hip is put out of joint, a future king is ignored, prophets are timid, a chosen people get lost, God appears only in a small, still voice, a religious leader is blinded and thrown off his horse, and a carpenter is crucified.

And yet children are born, nations are forged, an imprisoned teenager and a dream saves Egypt, the youngest son, a shepherd, becomes king, the deceitful become wise, prophets rescue a people from exile, a murderer preaches about grace and writes love letters, and a carpenter becomes the savior.

What if this reversal, this thing against all odds….. is the key to unlock the way the universe is created and sustained? What if vulnerability is the only way change and power and transformation can happen. What if this placing our head on the holy ground of all being ***is the only path*** to new life and salvation…Could it be that death is the beginning… that this dying thing is the source and foundation of creation itself? It’s not life and death, but rather death is first…. And never last.

Seems to take the sting out of death. Also it seems to take away the power of our own making.

God’s ways are not our ways. Beyond our comprehension, always subverting what we expect. Sometimes demanding the impossible and always the improbable.

God’s ways are holy because they are not of our own making.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? Come over here, leave your fear behind - I have a new way, forged in love and trust…. Born out of death.

Look. A carpenter is resurrected. Anything is possible.

Believe it! Alleluia, Christ is Risen. The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia.

1. See J-Glenn Murray, *Homily Service*, The Liturgical Conference (Silver Spring, 1998), pp. 41-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)