

**Pastor Roy's sermon from April 19, 2014 (Saturday, Easter Vigil Svc.)**

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vigil, 2014

The creator patiently spins a world of wonder into being with animals, plants, breathtaking land formations and churning oceans. In time, one of the humans, Abraham, hears God calling him to sacrifice his son. Not unlikely in his day, though usually that kind of thing happened during major upheavals, not on a sunny warm day with the chatter of the sheep and goats in the background. He goes to the mount to obey this senseless command of violence but is spared by the mercy of God. The text suggests that God told him to do so, but we are invited by the rabbis of ancient and contemporary Judaism to respond to the text with wonder and curiosity--rather than shock and mistrust of a God who invites child sacrifice. In Abraham's world, atonement is provided and his son's life goes on. Today we might say, "God would not call us to sacrifice our child, this is an ancient story which helps us to think about the ongoing struggle to listen to God, obey God's command, and trust that even when we can make no sense of the command, we will be guided into faithfulness."

In Exodus we are invited to trust not only when we are uncertain, but when we have totally given up hope, when the enemy stands ready to recapture and enslave. Will God again provide a way? Isaiah paints a picture of a market in which food is purchased without money, without cost. He envisions the word of God going out and accomplishing all for which it was spoken. God takes care of that, every time. God calls to the bones, with Ezekiel's mouth. God brings the Jews back to life with a Word. The impossible is possible with God as long as it is God who acts, God who provides. Then Jonah reminds us that we cannot hide from God and that God seeks us in the most far flung, forsaken places, so that we may return to the path of faithfulness. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trust against all possibility and are delivered from death from the searing, blazing furnace.

The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament teems with impossible rescues. Hopeless deliverance. Life where only death should prevail. As Jesus' consciousness fades on the cross, he entrusts himself and his people to this God who delivers, redeems, saves, who brings hope when all is hopeless. He dies. His followers assume the end has come, that his life and ministry is over and will no longer have any influence. He was the one who brought meaning and hope and healing. Now who can heal the healer? They had not truly engaged his proclamation that God is at work in impossible ways. God is the bringer of life and hope and peace. God can save.

So, God acts. The folly of death is revealed and Christ is arisen. Jesus' life is not over. We have not come to the end. His life goes on. We have a new beginning. We have the birth of the community of Christ. Jesus' life goes on in us. We are the body of Christ. We are the resurrection. Christ is alive. The disciples learn the meaning of life and hope. They awaken to a new day. A new hope. A new meaning for life. As Jesus promised, death is defeated and life prevails--eternally granted by the creator and redeemer. He is alive. No more to be defeated.

Tonight is a reminder of our new beginning in Christ. Hope is reborn. We breathe it in deeply. We are all learning to trust that God is at work even when we cannot see clearly, cannot hear, cannot think, or feel this merciful presence. In this dark night we see the light of God and we know that we are not alone or abandoned. . . We serve a risen savior whose revelation of life fills us and all of creation as one.

He is risen! He is risen, Indeed!