

Easter Vigil 2010

Romans 6:3-11

Psalm 114

Luke 24:1-12

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

There have been so many questions on this journey,  
And they lead us here,  
To a mystery that is fathomless.

This journey ends at the mouth of a cave,  
And we cannot see into its depths.  
There is no way to know  
What's in there unless we enter.  
We cannot know what to expect.

The women who first came to the tomb  
Knew just what to expect.

A stone that would be hard to move,  
A dead body,  
A duty to be done,  
And then,  
The long journey back into emptiness and grief.

When they arrived,  
They found that nothing was as they expected.  
The stone rolled away,  
The door standing open,  
The body gone,  
And then, God's messengers,  
And the question.

Why do you look for the living among the dead?

Why?

Because everything tells us  
That this is what we must expect.  
Death is final;  
Grief endures,  
Injustice prevails,  
Force overwhelms everything in its path,  
Anxiety and fear sap life's energy,  
And nothing ever changes.

I wonder if this is how the women felt,  
As they walked towards the tomb.

I wonder if they had forgotten,  
As we sometimes do,  
That the promises of God never fail.  
God may be slow  
In bringing these promises to birth,  
But God is faithful,  
And tells the truth.

God made a world that is good,  
And blessed it with divine presence.  
God brought slaves into freedom.  
God finds those who are lost and brings them home.  
God sits down in the dust  
with those who are so exhausted or hungry or oppressed  
they seem like dry bones in a dusty valley,  
and God waits there with them, and then,  
when all hope is gone,  
God breathes fresh air,  
Brings rain,  
And calls the dead into life.

The women who walked towards the tomb  
Did not remember this,  
Or did not dare believe it.  
And why should they?  
In the death of Jesus,

All the promises of God  
Had broken and fallen into darkness.

It's true.  
But don't believe it.

It'd true.  
Jesus died.  
And to those who watched him die,  
To those who watched the sun go dark,  
and heard him cry out in utter abandonment,  
it surely seemed that all was lost,  
that God could not be the God they had expected,  
and that life and hope would never be the same.

It is true,  
But don't believe it.  
Because there is a greater truth,  
And a deeper mystery,  
And if you,  
Like the women,  
Dare to walk into the tomb,  
You will find truth waiting in the darkness.

It's only when the women go all the way  
Into the tomb,  
Only when they enter the darkness,  
That God's light and God's voice  
Surround them and shake them  
And send them back out  
Into a world that is not ready  
For what they have to say.

The world may not be ready,  
Scoffers may call their story an idle tale,  
but they keep on telling the truth  
as they saw it and heard it.

They come to us again,  
Now,  
This evening,  
Telling their story.

It's up to us now,  
To choose.

Will we walk with those women  
On the expected journey to the dead end,  
Looking for the living among the dead?

Or will we listen to the story  
Of what they found there,  
And go towards the tomb ourselves,  
and bend down to enter the mystery?

The women came to a tomb  
That marked the end of a journey,  
And found, instead,  
That it was the beginning.

I cannot tell you exactly what happened.

I cannot tell you exactly what will happen  
If you go there.

But I do know this—  
I know, because I have been inside the tomb,  
And because I have sat with some of you  
As you went in and came back out,  
I know that the mystery in the darkness  
Is alive, and full of promise.  
I know that the mystery in the darkness  
Is fearful, and trustworthy.  
I know that the darkness  
Is the place where the light is born.

There's a lot I don't know,  
But I do know this.

I don't know exactly what the women found in the tomb,  
But whatever they found,  
It brought them life,  
Where they had seen death.  
And it brought them to the beginning of a journey,  
When they had come to the end.

This is not the end of the journey after all.  
It is the new beginning.

Our journey begins again here,  
At the font  
That is both tomb and wellspring of life,  
In the darkness that turns to light,  
In the promises of God  
That make all life new.

There is no way to know what we will find.  
But we know,  
We trust,  
We believe,  
It will be good,  
Because God is good,  
And the promises of God  
Have come to life.

