

Sermon for Saturday, April 11, 2009

Holy Saturday
By Tim Ljunggren

First Lesson **Job 14:1-14**
Psalm **31:1-4, 15-16**
Second Lesson **1 Peter 4:1-8**
Gospel **Mathew 27:57-66**

Tonight, we have gathered in the darkness of this spring night around the wavering flame of the paschal candle. In this circle of light, we have marked in our ancient book the progress of salvation, of God's mighty acts in human history. Yes, we gather this evening with candle and story and song—but we're not alone. Standing with us—standing in our midst, if we have eyes to see—are Adam and Eve longing for paradise lost, Noah searching for dry land, the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea, Israel desperately yearning to return home, the prophets pointing in a new direction. Those who stand among us this evening are, in fact, living signs of who we are today and that for which we yearn in the depths of our hearts: the world transformed into a peaceful garden, a people liberated of every form of oppressive slavery, a church which holds forth and promotes, with utter clarity and conviction, God's endless mercy, love, and justice.

On this night we also mark the steps of that age-old dance between human suffering and divine mercy, between folly and compassion; we mark the progress of salvation from the creation of the world to this place and time in our history. We do so, however, in the light of faith, that God-given capacity to see our lives and our world, not as random moments of birth, work, and death, but as the very sacrament through which the presence of grace is being revealed in the ordinary signs and rhythms of life, in our limitations and the fear, the doubt they produce; indeed, in our suffering, in our passion, yes, even in our own deaths.

Sisters and brothers, the ancient world which still marks our path through this world is, to be sure, not the sign of our abandonment to the power of darkness and despair; rather, it is the meeting place between God and humanity, between heaven and earth, between our pain and God's healing balm. This has been revealed to us, neither through spectacular signs nor in sensible words of

wisdom, but through one of us, a human being, in the wounded body of our Lord Jesus Christ who now is with us, eager to wash us, eager to embrace us, eager to renew his spirit within us, and eager to feed us on his life in God.

So here we are—we who are thirsty for mercy and peace, we who are hungry for love and justice—we come to the table this evening in anticipation. “Christ is risen!” we whisper, barely audible as wine and bread mingle in our mouths. And then as we glance to our left and to our right, we see Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, and many, many more eating and drinking and—yes—weeping with tears of joy, for they, too, have come home: home to the cross, our tree of life; home to the grave, our doorway to the promised land; home to the banquet that is set before us this evening, our table groaning under the weight of God’s infinite blessing on our step, our path, our dance toward the dominion of light.

Alleluia! Christ has risen!

Amen. ...

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