

## **Easter ( Saturday Vigil / Sunday)**

*April 19/20, 2025*

Happy Easter, everyone. Alleluia! It brings me great joy to be with all of you this night / day as we gather to remember and celebrate and give thanks for the incredible God we have. This is a God who doesn't simply watch the world he created. This is a God who immerses himself in it. This is a God who doesn't simply tell us how to live. He shows us. This is a God who doesn't make us go it alone, but one who walks with us every step of the way. And this is a God who isn't just willing to give a little to rescue us. He's willing to give everything for our sake, willing to give his very life so that we may have the very thing he laid down - life - and have it abundantly. What a God we have!

What did we do to deserve that? Were we kind enough? Were we generous enough? Were we merciful enough? Were we compassionate enough? Did we love enough? What did he see in us that prompted him to come to us in the person of Jesus, to come to us and walk a path not one of us would ever want to walk?

He saw a people who were lost.

He saw a people struggling to get back on the right path.

He saw a people estranged from him and estranged from one another.

He saw a people unsure of how to live.

He saw a people who were wounded, broken, troubled and afraid.

And yes, he saw sin.

And so, what God did for us (and continues to do for us) had nothing to do with OUR goodness, but had everything to do with HIS. And it wasn't because we had done lots of things right and had somehow "earned" it. That's simply not possible. Ever. No, our God doesn't act that way. There are no limits on his love. No conditions. No requirements. Everything God does is because of his infinite graciousness. It's all gift. What a God we have!

What is so remarkable about that is that we seldom act that same way. We give a little at times, but mostly from our excess and not from our want. We forgive a little at times, but usually not for the big stuff. We reach out a little to people in need, but often to people we like or people who can repay us in some way, at some point down the road. And we love a little at times, but on our terms. We love who we want, when we want, to the degree we want. And God doesn't ever love that way.

My dear friends, Jesus didn't do what he did so that everything would remain the same. In fact, he did what he did so that NOTHING would be the same. He laid down his life so that we could share in God's divine life in ways we never had before, with a kind of profound intimacy, profound communion with our God, a God who loves us more than we can imagine.

In other words, Jesus laid down his life to save us, to redeem us, to destroy death and win for us a newness of life, one that starts now and continues into eternity, a life in the Spirit in which we are more able to see as God sees, act as God acts, love as God loves. That's the incredible gift of Easter. That's the incredible promise. That's what it means to live in the light and power and joy of the Resurrection. But that's also the challenge.

Are we up to it? Can we let our old selves die so that something more beautiful, more hopeful, more God-like can grow in its place? Can we start loving a little more like God loves, not tomorrow or next week or next month or a year from now, but right now, this very moment?

My dear friends, being faithful begins with being grateful, grateful for every wonderful thing God has done for us, not just in the distant past, but every good thing he showers upon us continually, every day. And those things that aren't so wonderful, the pain and sorrows and difficulties and crosses that sometimes come our way too, well, they are not the end. They don't get the last say. They no longer have power over us. They don't win. God wins. Every time, and today is proof of that.

And so as we leave this holy place rejoicing in God's great love for us shown through the incredible act of our Lord Jesus, let's strive to do for others what God has done for us by:

Seeking the lost.

Comforting the sorrowful.

Forgiving what seems unforgivable.

Reaching out to the lonely.

Loving those we seem unlovable.

And most importantly, let's do it for no other reason than that God loves us unconditionally and wants us to do the same. That's our gift to God.

Let's give it.

He is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Have a blessed Easter everyone.