



ST BART'S

A SERMON by:

The Rev. Matthew J. Moretz, Associate Rector

Easter for St. Bartholomew

Sermon preached at the seven o'clock p.m. service, March 30, 2013

The Easter Vigil

Based on Luke 24:1-12

How long, O Lord, have we been waiting in the dark? How long have we been hiding away from soldiers, with tears running down our faces, jumping at every bump in the night? How long, dear Teacher, did our hearts ache as you endured such agony? We heard that even from the cross you were consoling us, forgiving us. What wondrous love! What a horror to see such a loving person, you, of all people, suffer like that. In the dark, we were grateful that you could be at rest now, after all that they threw at you.

The worst thing about it is that I should have been there with you, Lord. I left you with them, I ran away. I left you with their jeers, their thorns, their nails.

Joanna, the Marys, then Peter: they ran in to our hiding place breathless. They tell us that your tomb is empty. Not only that, but that you are alive. What did the angels say to them from the grave? "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He's not here, but has risen?" Alive, Jesus? You're back? You said you'd be back. But I didn't believe you. I was ready to move on. And, you know, I'm tired now. Part of me wishes that you would have just stayed dead. Part of me wishes that you'd let it be over. Let it be forgotten. We can dust ourselves off, and scatter back to a comfortable life at home never speaking of this again. I can go back to munching figs in Galilee. Right back where we started.

But now, Lord, there's this other part of me, the part you showed me. It's so small now, but I can tell that it's growing. There's this corner in my heart that's beaming. That's so light, and, even through these tears, I'm feeling joy, Lord. I was like this (defensive posture) for so long. And I'm opening up again, Lord.

Because, you're back. You died, and oh, how you died, and I wish it hadn't happened, but death can't hold you, can it! Death and the Devil, they gave it all they had, and you never stopped being who you were, even in the valley of their shadow, even mounted on their cross, you never stopped living and loving. In a former life I said nothing good could come out of Nazareth, but what did I know! Death can't stop you! All the devilish things we did, they can't stop you.

They didn't break you. You broke them. And you gave us the power to break them, too.

I was in the dark, Lord, and I wanted all of this to be over, because I didn't realize how much life there was going to be on the other side of all this, life that had always been there. But before, life was so small.

I thought that the world was ruled by the people who had it all, by people with soldiers and crosses, by people who wielded the sword and threatened us with death. I was scared of it. Running from it. Bargaining with it. Dancing to its tune. Some days, Lord, I wanted to bite back.

How funny! The most powerful tool that Death had, that cross, it ended up showing all that Death couldn't do. Death has no power over you, no power over us. It never did, really. Death doesn't have the final word; you always have the final word, Lord. And it is a word of love and forgiveness and eternal blessing. And I am so grateful to you, Lord,

for opening this Way for me. I couldn't see it before, but now, in this new light, I can see.

I haven't been sleeping much these past days, but when I have, I've been having that dream you told me I'd be having. I see Heaven. And Heaven isn't shut up; it's wide open now. And I can see you. And the angels and the saints, all of them. I see them walking on you, going up and down, all kinds of traffic between heaven and earth. You're the highway. You're the ladder. And with every passing breath that ladder is getting shorter and shorter. Heaven and earth are getting closer and closer.

And now I can tell you're just around the corner. In a little while, you're going to be walking with us again. Speaking with us again. Eating with us again. Because you aren't done with us! There is so much more to do with you! You're back. You're with us and you're in us and you're through us. When I see you again, it's still going to give me a start, but it'll be worth it!

I should have seen this coming. You created everything that is. You brought life from no life. You freed us from Pharaoh, swallowing up his chariots, bringing freedom where there was only slavery. And after the Babylonians destroyed everything, even your Temple, Lord, you brought muscle and sinews and skin and breath back to our dry bones. You brought us back home. You brought us back from the dead then, and now you're doing it again.

I'm going to live like you did, Lord. Even to the ends of this cruel earth. Telling your story. Speaking of the True Life you showed us. Breaking your bread with all sorts. Baptizing them in your living water. Washing feet, even. Bringing your consolation and joy and forgiveness where there has been so precious little of it. Bringing you to the hospitals. Bringing you to the prisons. Finding you among the scoundrels. Finding you among the poor of body and spirit. I'm going to be like you, love like you, live like you. Look at what you've done, Lord. Look at what you've done to me. I'm not afraid!

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