

Easter Vigil 2011 Matt 28; 1-10 The Rev Gail Davis,

To borrow a phrase from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter message: The Victory is won. Even though we read the newspapers and see live media of earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, bigotry and bloodshed, the Victory is won. Jesus came out of his grave. He came out his grave, defeating the powers of evil and death, and he saved us. Here at the Tomb, there was a great earthquake, and an angel of the Lord appeared, descending from heaven with his appearance as lightning, and clothing white as snow. And this angel is telling the disciples not to be afraid.

Saint Paul says not that we can hope for victory, because we already have it. Even in his day, life was difficult. Unfortunately, though we wish it were so, there is no simple formula that will stop suffering. There is only confidence that what happened in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus declares a truth that no power can conquer.

“And the disciple saw, and believed.”

This is what we must believe if we are to call ourselves Christians. We don't know how it happened, but we do know why. It happened because of God's love for us. And that dear friends, is the reason we are here today. We are here to celebrate the fact that God gave God's son to us and for us. Because God loves us.

Because God loves us, none of us can ever be less than the object of God's attention and delight. The whole world has changed. During that last dark hour, the earth trembled; the curtain of the temple was torn-God was set loose. And we too are set loose. We are free to become the people that God wants us to be.

Because of this indestructible love, all of our acts of compassion and service to others, no matter how seemingly small are worthwhile. Whatever we do out of love, matters.

The victory is won: however terrible the conflict in our world today, the truth of God is in no danger of defeat.

Because of the empty tomb and the reappearance of Jesus we are given hope. The women who came to the tomb were the first to announce the Good News. Look what happened to the first disciples! They went on from that first Easter Day to become courageous leaders, turning the world upside down.

Easter gives us the hope we so desperately need. If Jesus can raise people from the dead, and himself be raised by the power of God, then you and I can be raised as well. We cannot do it by ourselves, I'm sure we all have tried and failed. We don't know exactly how it happens, but we do

know that love heals. Love, unconditional love has been offered to us by this mighty death and resurrection.

Easter is not just about death; it is about life, and not just life after death; it about real life right now. And Easter is not just about what happened in the past. It is about the future as well. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are becoming new.”

What you do with the Good News is up to you. Hopefully you will claim your second chance, your second birth, your new lease on life-it is entirely up to you. The Gospel tells us to wake up and arise from the dead and Christ will give us new life.

Remember this: God is not through with us yet! God did not stop saving God’s people 2 thousand years ago. God is still making a way for us, guiding us through the wilderness that we often create out of our own stubbornness, and yes, our own fear.

So, on this first in-breaking of Easter, rejoice in the knowledge that God has defeated death, and know that God continues to beat back death and that God can and will do it again for you. The victory is won.