

The Great Vigil of Easter

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Genesis 1:1—2:2

Exodus 14:10—15:1

1 Samuel 17

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Luke 24:1-12

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Alleluia, Christ is risen!  
*The Lord is risen indeed, alleluia!*

Happy Easter and  
welcome to St. Anne's  
for our favorite service of the year.

This is our first  
Great Vigil of Easter in two years.  
Oh how we have longed for this day,  
and it is all "so good!"

Whether you are  
a newcomer,  
a longtimer,  
or our guest today . . .

whether you're here in the pews  
or worshipping with us  
from Iowa, Australia,  
or other parts around the globe . . .

*. . . welcome! We are glad you are here.*

\* \* \*

You may not know this,  
but in some ways  
today is all about clothing.

Of course,  
I'm not talking about  
big hats  
or white shoes  
or seersucker suits.

No, I mean something more.

Have you ever noticed  
what a huge role clothing plays  
in the Bible?

Earlier this morning  
we heard the story of creation,  
how God clothed the heavens and the earth  
in all their splendor.

But the story of Genesis goes on from there.  
God is *also* the one  
who clothes Adam and Eve <sup>1</sup>  
after they fall into sin and shame.

Moses and the people of Israel  
walk through the Red Sea  
with nothing but the clothes on their back,  
and though they wander for 40 years,  
their clothes never wear out. <sup>2</sup>

Young David refuses to be clothed in armor <sup>3</sup>  
because unlike Goliath,  
he knows he has *God* on his side.

Ezekiel watches in a vision  
as God raises up those old dusty bones  
and clothes them again  
with sinew, and flesh, and skin  
and breathes into them  
a wind of new life. <sup>4</sup>

God is always clothing his people  
with exactly what they need.

But fast forward  
to the story we just heard:  
the story of the resurrection.

On the first day of the week,  
right at dawn,  
the women go to the tomb  
to anoint Jesus' body . . .  
*but he is not there!*

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:21

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 29:5

<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 17:38-39

<sup>4</sup> Ezekiel 37:7-9

They tell the apostles,  
and Peter is the only one  
who will believe them.

He runs to see for himself,  
and there, where Jesus' body should be,  
all Peter finds . . .  
is a pile of clothes,  
an empty burial shroud.<sup>5</sup>

Y'all, Jesus is risen from the dead,  
and apparently he is naked!

It's probably safe to assume  
that at some point after the resurrection  
Jesus does find some clothes,  
but this moment matters more  
than you might think.

**When Jesus conquers death—  
when he rises and removes from us  
the sin and shame that  
we have carried since Adam and Eve—  
*all he is wearing . . . is our humanity.***

Today Jesus is the new and greater Adam,  
who restores us to our naked innocence  
as though we've returned to the Garden of Eden.

Today Jesus is the new and greater Moses,  
who brings us all safely through the waters of death.

Today Jesus is the new and greater David,  
who needs no armor to win the final battle.

Today Jesus is the new and greater Ezekiel,<sup>6</sup>  
who raises up our weary bones,  
and stands our bodies in their flesh,  
and breathes in us eternal life.

With Jesus on our side  
creation is all brand new.  
It's just God and us now,  
with nothing else in between.

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 24:12

<sup>6</sup> This run of Jesus as the "new and greater" version of biblical heroes is inspired by Tim Keller.

For what it's worth,  
that is why long ago,  
when the first Christians  
began having the first Easter Vigils,  
their converts came to be baptized  
naked and unashamed.

For obvious reasons we don't do that anymore,  
but in some ways it made perfect sense.

Like newborn infants  
passing through the womb . . .  
like the dead rising  
from the grave without a shroud . . .  
those early Christians understood  
that if the resurrected Christ  
has clothed himself in our flesh,  
then we now clothe ourselves in Christ,  
and Christ alone.

\* \* \*

So whoever you are,  
whether you were baptized  
moments ago or years ago,  
know this day that  
*you have been clothed in Christ.*

You need no armor;  
you need no shroud;  
you need no clever costume or disguise  
for the flesh and blood that clothes your soul  
is the same that now clothes  
the resurrected Redeemer of the world.

You have been clothed in Christ, my friends.  
Never again hide yourself in shame,  
for you are loved  
just as you are.

Amen.