

Easter Vigil 2011
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Blessed/Broken/Poured Out. Three words I shared with you on Holy Thursday. These same three words resound in our liturgy tonight. Blessed: We heard the reading of creation in Genesis, the original blessing, in which God creates all as Good. In God's hands, all is Good, Blessed, Bright and Beautiful. You can almost see God stepping back from his handiwork and from God's lips to our ears we hear: Mm, mm Good.

Broken: But the Blessed of Creation becomes the "broken" of a world held in the grasp of human hands. Underscoring the victory chants of Moses and Miriam on the "other side" of the Red Sea, we hear a story of only one of the infinite number of conflicts, divisions, that fragment our world, that break it in two or more: In the Exodus story we are witness of a world in which one nation enslaves another. And God is forced into being "for" one and "against" the other. God becomes a side taker, a warrior god who champions the winners, at least as God is seen through the eyes of the victor. See the bad guys with their broken chariot wheels, the shores of the Red Sea strewn with bodies. And God is implicated in this violence. I wonder if you can see God taken aback, saying, "They have put words in my mouth. They see me as the liberator but at what cost? I Am Life, not death."

Blessed/Broken/Poured out! Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah, this outpouring of all that is good, all that is gift. This is God's Comeback, God's response to the image of one who is as much destroyer as creator: "Come to the water, come without money. Receive all that I have to give you. My ways are not your ways." Or hear the words of the prophet Ezekiel speaking of the outpouring of God's creative love: From God's lips to our ears we hear: "Come back to me! I will give you a new heart, a new spirit. You shall be my people and I will be your God."

But God's constant outpouring of mercy, motherly/fatherly love is not enough to break the cycle of violence and oppression. God's goodness is not enough to break through Satan's grasp, the grasp of sin and death itself. We can almost hear God saying, "What more can I do." From God's lips to our ears. "This is my beloved, Son. Listen to him."

Lord Jesus, you are God's in breaking, out breaking, breath taking, breakthrough. How remarkable. The cycle of violence is broken forever in Jesus the victim, the lamb, the one who willingly lays down his life for his friends. But it still hasn't sunk in after 2000 years. We're still checking out the empty tomb and stepping back, taken aback, we're waiting for the comeback. But it's already here. He's already here. From God's lips to our ears. He is not in the tomb. Death has no more power.

I saw this yesterday as people came to the church for Good Friday and they came to the font and it was dry and empty. And some were startled, taken aback, where did the water go? And some would step back and wonder? And some would dip down deep to see if they could find even a drop of water. No it's really empty. We're waiting at the empty tomb like those women in the Gospel, Not knowing what in the world is really happening.

This Easter night reminds us of what our hearts already know: that we are so blessed in Jesus Christ, even in our brokenness, even when we can't seem to break the cycle of cynicism and despair, he comes back to pour out his love, his life-giving, sustaining, Spirit who unites us as One.

Whit, Teddy, Melinda, Brittany. In a few moments you will come to the waters of baptism. This moment in your life, this new birth in Christ is not about your personal salvation. (At least not only about that!) Tonight you choose to experience the world in a new

way, to see the world as God sees it through the eyes and ears, hands and feet and heart of Jesus the Risen Lord. You see the world as Blessed and Broken but the outpouring of God's spirit is more powerful than sin and death. Tonight as you profess your faith you are proclaiming to the world that there is another Way, there is another Truth, there is another Life, who is Jesus the Risen Lord. From God's lips to your ears. Alleluia!