

EASTER VIGIL

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2016

"WORD, WATER, WITNESS"

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The days of Lent are over! For the past 40 days we have been busy opening the treasures of Lent! For the past 5 Sundays we have been saying: *"Behold, NOW is the acceptable time; NOW is the day of salvation."*

And to open and receive the treasures of Lent we have heard ourselves pray: *"OPEN MY EYES! OPEN MY HANDS! OPEN MY EARS! OPEN MY HEART! OPEN MY LIFE!"*

And NOW the treasure has been found! NOW the treasure is opened to us! NOW we find ourselves basking in the light and life of a Savior who loves each one of us, as if He has only one of us to love.

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

NOW, TONIGHT, is all about WORD and WATER and WITNESS!

What else would bring us back to Church again this week, after we have already been here 6 times since last Sunday? What else would move us to worship again, after having sat through 9 services already this week? What else would motivate us to sit here and listen to 14 scripture readings, and renew our Baptismal vows and go crazy with flowers and lights and music, while we could be at home on a Saturday night, with a cold beer in hand, watching the World Wrestling Federation? What else could possibly make for this kind of celebration?

THE TREASURE HAS BEEN FOUND! THE TREASURE HAS BEEN OPENED!

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and creation happens!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and a covenant is sealed with a rainbow!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and Abraham is given a promise!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and the Children of Israel are delivered!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and salvation is ours!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and He gives wisdom!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and He makes us His people!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and dry bones come to life!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and He gathers His people together!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and He shows His mercy!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and He brings us to a land of milk and honey!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and He delivers from a fiery furnace!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and with Jesus we go from death to life!

GOD SPEAKS HIS WORD – and the stone is rolled away!

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

AND THEN GOD SENDS HIS WATER WITH HIS WORD TO BRING US INTO HIS FAMILY!

BY WATER – we live among God's people!

BY WATER – we hear the Word of God!

BY WATER – we share in His Supper!

BY WATER – we serve all people!

BY WATER – we strive for justice and peace!

AND FINALLY BY WATER – we proclaim the Good News!

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

The story of Easter is MORE than a story about women who came to the tomb.
The story of Easter is MORE than a story about a rock rolled away.
The story of Easter is MORE than a vision of angels in white robes, saying, *"He is not here!"*
The story of Easter is a story about WORD and WATER and WITNESS!
CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

The story of Easter is the story about the power of GOD'S WORD. From the words of creation to the angel's announcement to Mary that she would give birth to her first born Son and He would be the salvation of the world.

The story of Easter is the story about the power of GOD'S WORD. To preach and teach among a people who did not always hear what was spoken and did not always see what was being done, and yet like little children they were held in His hands.

The story of Easter is the story about the power of GOD's WORD in Jesus Christ, and to follow Him from the cross to the tomb, because His PASSION will not separate HIM from US.

The story of Easter is the story about the power of GOD to roll away a stone, and replace it with a promise, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age. And nothing will ever separate you from My love."*

The TRUE TREASURE of LENT and a week called HOLY AND GREAT is found in WORD and WATER and WITNESS. And that Treasure is now open to us! That Treasure now takes hold of our lives, and turns us into the children of God.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD and GOD'S WATER to create and preserve and protect!
THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD and GOD'S WATER to touch our lives with grace and mercy!
AND NOW THE POWER TO WITNESS TO OUR WORLD, the great things God has done for us!

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, speak to us Your Word!

Heavenly Father, wash us with Your Water!

Heavenly Father, fill our hearts and lives with a living WITNESS to Your Treasures!

And all God's children say,

Amen.

Sola Deo Gloria!

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!