

Easter Day, April 4, 2010

Lections: Isaiah 65: 17-25; Ps. 118:1,2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; Luke 24:1-12

We've had some fires here at the church this week – fires that didn't require the trucks from the firehouse, but somebody should know about it. A fire on the pavement as people left the liturgy on Thursday night where there was a question or two: were you in the garden with him? Are you one of his disciples? Last night there was another fire on the pavement and in our hands too and then there was fire in the water from the baptismal font; it was held in the hands of one who is finding the light of faith blazing in her own life. Sacred fire, holy light for the journey. Somebody should know about that.

There has been a holy week in this place as we have moved from one liturgy to another - moments of longing, intimacy, sorrow and joy. Liturgy means the work of the people and our work has been to light fires and not put them out. Some years it feels as if we will not survive it and we experience the work as draining all the energy out of us. But this year, the very life force of God has been full, giving us and those who joined the pilgrim base community the fuel we needed. Today we savour and celebrate all that we have learned, all that is now incarnate in our bodies as experienced faith. Even Jesus moved this week. Somebody should know about that.

The women who went to the tomb on Easter morning were likely exhausted by the events that had taken place. They had their own stations of the cross as they watched and stood and wept at all they had experienced in their walk with Jesus. Perhaps it was still dark as they made their way to the tomb; perhaps the soldiers guarding it had kept a campfire going. They were met not by the death they expected but with a question, "why do you seek the living among the dead?" He is not here; he is risen as he said. Somebody should know about that. Jesus had moved into something they didn't expect and that blazing discovery would change their world, and ours ... if we let it, if we will choose resurrection.

Some of us have absorbed these stories and the call to rise from the dead, to practice resurrection ourselves.

Last night we saw some dry bones here on this floor and heard God's challenge to Ezekiel, "Mortal, can these bones live?" They can live only if the breath, the power of God moves over and into them. And we remember the death of Lazarus who came from his tomb wrapped in death. Unbind him, Jesus said, and let him go.

These are the final tasks for us – unbinding death and breathing over dry bones, waiting for the power of God to move into a community; that is what Easter looks like. Lazarus could not unbind himself and bones in a valley cannot stand without help. I think that is what happened to Jesus. The community unbound him from death and set him free, to go to Galilee, to move again in the midst of them, in their common life, in their own homes.

Each person who experienced a miracle, was given healing, took a parable and chewed on it until it was satisfying, removed a grave cloth. It took a faith community to set him free. Make no mistake about it –

God was active in his rising. And that rising would be shared by those who were still afraid, still disbelieving, still hidden behind closed doors. Then the gift of the Spirit's fire would set them free. Jesus was unbound again and lived again in the lives of all he touched. This work of unbinding and breathing is the work of an Easter people. Somebody should know about that.

We unbind the voices of those who wrote meditations and created art for the new Stations of the Cross. We unbind when we are willing to answer the questions of children, 'why is it called Good Friday?' We unbind when we listen to whispered prayers, allow music to move us further into beauty, hold a hand or a foot in our hands. We unbind when we walk for affordable housing or breast cancer, fight for the arts in the schools, rebuild a house or a life. Jesus is still moving in our Galilee, in this parish and in the places and people we love. Unbind him in your own lives as many have done and let us all be free.

But watch out for the fire. Somebody should know about that.

Amen+

The Rev. Dr. Linda Privitera