

Great Easter Vigil, 3rd of April 2021.

Readings:

Romans 6:3-11

Mark 16:1-8

Sermon

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, my Lord and my Saviour.

Dear Friends,

For over a year now our lives are dominated by one thing and one thing only: Corona virus, also known as Covid-19.

At the beginning of the pandemic, and still among a certain group in society, a number of people trivialized the whole situation; 'it is only a flu', nothing serious can happen. Even when they are confronted with large numbers of infections and deaths all over the world, there are still people saying that no extra measures are necessary. Luckily the majority listens to science and knows better. Whole countries are in lockdown, hospitals are overcrowded because of the second or the third wave, the economy comes to a standstill, many people are infected or even dying, the pandemic feels of medieval proportions. In medieval times we talked about 'The Black Death'. It feels as if we are in a similar situation.

How do we deal with so much darkness?

When I was a young boy I attended an Easter Vigil Service in the parish church of St. Jude's in Eindhoven. One line in that service blew me away and I still remember it: better than to curse darkness is to light a single candle.

And that's what we have done tonight. We are Christians. And in an Easter Vigil we make fire and then light a candle. In our faith this candle stands for Christ: the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Jesus Christ in his life among us went through the darkest of times. He was persecuted, arrested, mocked and flogged and ultimately nailed to a cross, the most horrible death the Romans could come up with. Jesus begged his Father to let that cup of suffering be taken away from him. Yet, he said, I want your will to be done, not mine.

Jesus died on that cross and was buried. But this was not the end. He was raised by the Father. He was very much alive again. And that was not just important for his life, but for our lives as well. As we heard from the apostle Paul: in our baptism we join Jesus in his death. We die and are buried with Christ in baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of his Father, we also may live new lives.

Today's Gospel tells us how three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome, went to the grave and saw the big stone rolled away. In the tomb they saw an angel and they were alarmed by all this. The angel told them that Jesus wasn't there anymore, he was raised from the dead. He tells them to go back to Peter and the disciples. But the women fled from the tomb because terror and amazement had seized them. They were afraid, they were overwhelmed, they were still in the dark and couldn't believe what they had seen and heard. This feeling can be very familiar to us. We can feel in dark times. But when we feel in the dark, better than to curse the darkness is to light a single light, a light of hope. We can always turn to hope in Christ! The light of Christ, the giver of new life: Christ is risen, he is risen indeed! Happy Easter!