

Easter Vigil
Matthew 28:1-20
April 15, 2017
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Nothing Can Separate us from God

The tomb is empty. Jesus is no longer dead, but risen. The world is ever-changed by the Easter story, and we are called to live into the joy of a resurrection faith.

Resurrection faith is more than belief that Jesus' dead body rose again, more than a happy ending to a tough week, more than one more miracle added on top of the other miracles of Jesus' life. Resurrection faith is recognizing in the sign of the empty tomb the joy of knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Our actions cannot separate us from God, for the Risen Jesus instructs the women to go to the disciples, his brothers, and tell them that he will see them in Galilee. These are the same disciples who betrayed him, who denied him, who ran and hid themselves, enveloped in fear, shame, and doubt. Yet, in spite of their actions, Jesus has forgiven them and reaches out to them, recognizing them as part of his family of believers, bringing them hope, healing, and new life. What a blessing to hear to the good news that that our actions, our weak and sinful natures, cannot separate us from the love of God.

Our unworthiness, our status, does not separate us from God. All four of our gospels tell us that women were the first witnesses of the Risen Jesus: women, who were routinely seen as less than fully human, whose lives, simply because of their gender, had less meaning and importance, by the standards of the world. But God rejects humanity's judgements and values, and instead invites the women to fully participate in God's mission, to be agents of change and reconciliation in the world by delivering this good news that Jesus lives. Our Risen Lord's actions loudly proclaim that all are precious and beloved — including the marginalized, the nameless, and the invisible — for nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Tonight we've shared the new fire, the light of Christ, with one another. We've heard the stories of our past, of God's love for God's people, in spite of our stumbling and failures. . . stories of the crossing of the Red Sea; wisdom readings to teach us about truth and what it means to walk in the paths of righteousness and justice; words that remind us that God is always with us, renewing us and restoring us until we are gathered home.

We will soon experienced God's love through the gift of water, as we witness the baptisms of Layla Rose, Iris, and Rowan, and renew our own baptismal vows. We'll be reminded of our connection to one another and all the communion of saints, and that through the life-giving waters of baptism, we find eternal life in Christ.

We will soon experience God's infinite love when we are fed Christ's Body and Blood at our Lord's table, receiving nourishment, strength, and renewal of new life in Him, preparing us to go back out into the world, restored by the power of the Spirit.

All that we experience together tonight — through word and action, story, proclamation, and song — all that we shared tonight in community, helps to open us to God's truth — that nothing

can separate us from the love of God. We can have the courage to look inside ourselves and ask the Almighty to open up those hidden and dark places where we need Christ's light, where we need our Lord's healing love to release us from all that draws us to focus inward, away from our Risen Lord and one another.

With God's help, we can begin to step away from those attachments and habits that block us from the loving light of our Lord and Savior, and instead experience true freedom, peace, and joy. With God's help, we can say "Yes" to Christ's invitation to new life, opening ourselves to be transformed through his infinite love.

We are so blessed. Through the empty tomb; through Christ's life, death, and resurrection; we are saved, for Christ is the way and the hope for everlasting life. Live into the truth of our resurrection faith, knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God.