

Easter Vigil
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
April 16, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

As you may have noticed from our first few readings and from many other elements of tonight's Easter Vigil service, there is an emphasis on water, an emphasis on Holy Baptism. The season of Lent has its origins in the period of catechesis, or instruction, for adults desiring Baptism. The "catechumens," as they were called, learned the mysteries of the Christian faith before officially becoming members of the church through Baptism at Easter Vigil. Even though there are no baptisms tonight, we still go through part of the baptismal liturgy in remembrance of our own baptisms. "In this most holy night our Savior, Christ the Lord, broke the power of death and by His resurrection brought life and salvation to all creation." Our Savior, Christ the Lord, broke the power of death and by His resurrection brings life and salvation to us in the waters of Holy Baptism. On this most holy night, we consider the connection between our Lord's resurrection from the dead and our Baptism into His death and resurrection, all prefigured for us in the Old Testament.

From the very beginning of Holy Scripture, Genesis 1, we have a picture, a prophecy of Holy Baptism. So many people read right past this: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light.'" God the Father created through His Son, God the Word, and God the Holy Spirit was there above the waters. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, and in relation to water. The beginning of Genesis points to the end of Matthew, where Jesus says: "Go therefore

and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, in relation to water. What Genesis teaches us about Holy Baptism is that the waters of Baptism are the waters of new creation. In Holy Baptism, we are made new, born again, born from above by water and the Spirit.

In the flood we have another picture of Resurrection and new life pointing ahead to Holy Baptism. As we prayed in Luther’s “Flood Prayer”: according to His strict judgment God condemned the unbelieving world through the Flood, yet according to His great mercy He preserved believing Noah and His family, eight souls in all.” The LORD saw how corrupt the world had become and that the intentions of man were evil. “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth.” The flood literally washed the sins of the world away, while at the same time preserving a righteous generation. In His mercy our LORD did not utterly wipe out mankind. Our Lord brought a remnant through the waters to a new life in a new creation. So also does Baptism wash away sins. In His mercy our LORD preserves us in the waters and makes us into a righteous generation.

Next we come to the Red Sea, where the LORD drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host, while at the same time leading the people of Israel through the water on dry ground. Again, this Old Testament story foreshadows what happens to us in Holy Baptism. The Lord leads us through the waters while at the same time using those waters to destroy our enemies: sin, death, and the devil. The people of Israel come through the waters of the Red Sea to a new life in the promised land. As St. Paul puts it, they were “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2). We too, the New Testament Israel, pass through the waters of Holy Baptism to a new life in the promised land, the Kingdom of God. God has brought us, His true

Israel, “into joy from sadness, loosed from Pharaoh’s bitter yoke, Jacob’s sons and daughters, led us with moistened foot through the Red Sea waters.” We are raised out of the waters into the new life that comes to us in the Resurrection of our LORD Jesus Christ.

In Romans 6, St. Paul connects our Baptism with the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead: “We were buried therefore with Him by Baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.” Our LORD Jesus Christ entered the watery grave in His death and there our sins were buried with Him. The flood of Holy Baptism washed away our uncleanness. As we sing in a familiar hymn, “Christ the ark of life, has ferried us across death’s raging flood.” Our enemies, sin, death, and the devil were drowned in the sea just as the unbelieving world and just as Pharaoh and his army. Yet our LORD brings us to the other side safely. In Holy Baptism our Lord unites us to Himself and raises us up with Christ that, like our Lord, we might never die again. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.