

Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

Why are you here tonight? What are you waiting for? So few of you. Such a little gathering. Do you really think he's coming back? C'mon now. Don't be ridiculous. Don't be absurd. What are you waiting for?

Do you expect someone to bring you back home? Of course we all want that, but that's a bit far fetched, isn't it? You can never go home again. The Promised Land, if it ever existed, isn't ours to live in anymore. What's that, you say? God spoke through Ezekiel and promised to bring you back home? That's a nice thought, I suppose, but can you really rely on that, especially after all these years? It just doesn't sound possible, but still, you're here, vigilant for the one who made the promise.

You also want someone to knit together your brokenness. When everything falls apart, of course we want it all to go back to the way that it was. But if all the kings horses and all the kings men couldn't put Humpty together again, why do we think that we're any different? Oh, of course, another promise from Ezekiel, and this time from a God-given vision. You think not just your lives, but the lives of everyone could be brought back together through the word and work of a God you can't see or hear? Sure, go ahead and believe that, I suppose. But it just seems impossible. But still, you're here, vigilant for the one who brought dry bones back to life.

And you expect someone to forgive you? We all want forgiveness, but it's not always in the cards. We've all failed, all fallen short of God's glory, in such profound ways. Not even our friends can forgive all of our blunders, nor can our family overlook all of our failures, so how could we expect

the perfection of the universe to overlook the chasmic faults that cut through our lives? Wait, another prophet now? Who's this Zephaniah anyway? Oh, God speaks through him too, you say. And God promises forgiveness, and even more than that, permanent presence. God will forgive us and remain with us? This all sounds so unlikely. But still, you're here, vigilant for the one whose very presence is forgiveness.

Someone to walk through fire with you? Like, to actually journey through hell for you? Now you're just sounding crazy. It's like there's any precedent for this. Wait, there is? Who are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Why should God appear with them in a fiery furnace, keeping them from the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar? Why should the Lord of the earth not just walk amongst us, but voyage even with those who seem destined for death and protect from the flames, to restore them to life? This does seem like good news...and that's why you're here, vigilant and ready to

walk through the fires ahead, the tests of time, alongside this one whose perfection is untouched by the flames.

But then you expect this someone to come back to life? Isn't that just too much to hope for? Isn't that just out of bounds? Even the greatest of heroes fall. You can take a bullet for someone, but that doesn't mean that you're invincible. This is life, not a video game! You can't regenerate and play the next level. But you say someone saw this Jesus? Not just one, but many? First Mary, and then the disciples. This is what you're waiting for tonight. This is why you vigil, to see death become life in the one who some say already brought Lazarus back from the dead.

And even more, you want someone to breathe new life in you. I suppose if this person truly did rise from the dead, then there's nothing keeping them from defying the laws of physics for others as well. If we're brought together with this person in a death like his, then I suppose we just might share

in a resurrection like his. So that's why we wait. Well, what else are we waiting for? Why else do we vigil? Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

What we do on this night often feels this absurd. It's not just others who question why we gather, looking for the living amongst the dead. It's us, as well. We struggle to believe, to understand, to comprehend. But tonight isn't about finding Jesus in logic, or in reason. It's about finding Jesus beyond even our wildest expectations, that our sorrow is met with inexplicable joy, that our tears are wiped away by the hands of the resurrected Son of God. We gather tonight to remind ourselves, and to remind the world, that we can hope beyond hope, that even when we don't understand, there is reason to believe, for before our lives came to be and before our eyes this very night, Christ is risen! **Christ is risen, indeed!** Amen.