

## Easter Vigil

The bible has a lot of stories. We have heard many of them tonight. Some outside the faith may call them myths. I get less aggravated about that nowadays than I used to. Did you know that both J.R.R. Tolkein and C.S. Lewis were convinced of the truth of the Bible through their study of mythology? What is a myth? According to Merriam-Webster a myth is “a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.”<sup>1</sup> So myths are stories. Many times, myths unveil a universal truth. That’s what intrigued Tolkein and Lewis. They studied myths and kept coming to universal truths of the Bible. The Holy Spirit convicted them and revealed to them that the stories of the Bible were the true story.

The Bible has many stories. Just because all myths are stories doesn’t mean that all stories are myths. The stories of the Bible are rooted in historical fact. To my knowledge, none of the stories of the Bible have been proven false. This is what separates Christianity from all other world religions. Other religions boil down to some kind of morality. Whether the stories that surround that religion are true or historical doesn’t really matter to that system of belief. However, the truth of the stories of the Bible are intrinsically related to the truth of Christianity. On the first Easter vigil, Jesus’ body really laid in a tomb. On the first Easter, Christ really rose from the dead. That matters to the truth of Christianity. As Paul says, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” (1 Cor 15:14)

The Bible has many stories, but there is one story that weaves itself through the entirety of the Bible. That story is the redemption of a fallen mankind by their Creator. And that is the most beautiful story of all. Have you noticed that stories and movies of redemption resonate even with unbelievers? Deep down, we know something isn’t right. Deep down, we know we are broken. Deep down, we know that we need help. In our sinful state, we don’t even know where to look for help and we put our trust in Mammon. But Mammon doesn’t redeem anyone.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth), accessed March 13, 2022

But the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit do redeem:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)

Paul says it this way:

“In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” (2 Cor 5:19)

In both these verses, ‘world’ means everyone who has ever lived or who ever will live. The work Jesus is resting from in His tomb paid for all the sin of all people of all time. There’s no sin that’s not covered. Your sin and my sin is paid for in full. You cannot and you must not try to pay for your sin to God. Your sin is covered by the blood of Jesus. “It is finished” were the words of our Lord as He died on the cross. Propitiation, or full atonement, has been accomplished for all your sin. In Christ, you are a new creation. In Christ, you are perfectly righteous before God.

St. John says:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn 1:9)

The forgiveness of your sins and the cleansing of your unrighteousness depends not on your efforts or works or attitude, but depends solely on the work of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is faithful to His promises. He is just and punished all your sin in Himself. You cannot and you must not try to pay for your sin to God. He must do it! And He does! You are forgiven and righteous. This amazing gift of forgiveness and righteousness comes to you through faith. “For we hold that one is justified by faith [alone] apart from works of the law.” (Rom 3:28)

The stories of God we have heard tonight are the story of your redemption in Christ. And this story began before the foundation of the world.

Dear beloved of the Lord, “In love [God] predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons [and daughters] through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.” (Eph 1:4c-8a)

In the Beloved, capital ‘B,’ you have Easter joy. A joy that cannot be robbed from you no matter what happens to you in this life. In our Easter joy, we gladly agree with Paul:

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height or depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”  
(Rom 8:38-39)

Dear Christian, your past is covered by the blood of Jesus, your present is secure in Jesus, and your future is guaranteed by His resurrection. May God be praised!

The Bible is indeed full of stories. And we love them. We love them because they show us the faithfulness of our God even though His people have proven to be unfaithful. We love them because they tell us of the person and work of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. We love them because they show us through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are children of God. And if we are children of God, let us go out in Easter joy and spread that joy to a dying world.

**He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia.**