

HOLY SATURDY - APRIL 11

Holy Saturday. A day of silence in the church. No mass is offered. The collect for the appointed liturgy speaks of our Lord's body resting in the tomb on this Sabbath day. As God the Father rested in the seventh day of creation, so the Son rests on...the figurative seventh day of his ministry? There's a powerful and suggestive idea!

Jesus said, "It is finished", the sixth of the seven last words from the cross on Good Friday. The work he came into the world to do at the command of the Father is now done. He has been faithful to the end, and his body rests.

His body was taken down and put into a tomb. He began this life from his mother's body and was laid then in a borrowed manger. Now his lifeless body has been taken again from the arms of his mother to be laid in a borrowed tomb. As he said, "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head".

Rich imagery and profound ideas indeed.

But there is another strand woven into the tapestry of Holy Saturday, found in the reading from I Peter 4:6, "...the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does."

Sit with that for a moment. The gospel being preached to the dead for their hope and liberation.

As you consider that weighty notion, move it to the back of your attention. I want you to either look up on-line or summon memory of the farm implement called a harrow.

In our area you see the harrow in Spring attached to the rear of a tractor. There are two major kinds: drag (looks like a wide-top bristle hairbrush, only the tines are steel spikes or blades, which dig into the earth) and disc (roundels of steel that slice the earth). Harrowing is the deep scoring of farmland to prepare for planting. What has lain since harvest as bare field—earth pressed down and clotted together by snow and ice—has to be ripped open to receive seed. Harrowing is, in a sense, disruptive—even destructive—but is also the means by which life will continue.

Now return your mind to the idea of Christ descending to the dead, as we say regularly in our creed, and breaking open hell, the prison of souls, and leading out the first Adam and then the human family. This is the final defeat of death, hell, satan, and sin. Christ is more powerful than all the bonds that constrain the fullness of creation.

If you're of a mind to wonder how Christ emptied hell's dark prison AND was at rest in the borrowed tomb, recall that body, flesh and blood, are perishable, mortal. Christ alive in the Spirit, is unconstrained. In the resurrection body, there are no limits.

Tonight is the Great Vigil.