



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

***April 3, 2010***  
***Easter Vigil***  
***Art Simon***

RCL: Genesis 1:1–2:4a; Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26; Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13; Psalm 46; Genesis 22:1-18; Psalm 16; Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21; Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18; Isaiah 55:1-11; Isaiah 12:2-6; Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6; Baruch 3:9-15, 32–4:4; Psalm 19; Ezekiel 36:24-28; Psalm 42 and 43; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 143; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Psalm 98; Romans 6:3-11; Psalm 114; Luke 24:1-12

LM: Genesis 1:1–2:2 or 1:1, 26-31a; Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35 or Psalm 33:4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20-22; Genesis 22:1-18 or 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11; Exodus 14:15–15:1; Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18; Isaiah 54:5-14; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13; Isaiah 55:1-11; Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6; Baruch 3:9-15, 32–4:4; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4 (*when baptism is celebrated*); Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 or Psalm 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19 (*when baptism is not celebrated*); Romans 6:3-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Luke 24:1-12

Among these texts are ones that call us to respond with compassion and justice to hunger, poverty, and other forms of oppression or suffering. The creation account, for example, proclaims God's generosity in providing for the human family. Psalm 136 is a great thanksgiving for God's steadfast love, which offers food to everyone, rescues the oppressed, and remembers our low estate. Exodus 14 recounts the most dramatic moment of release from the Egyptians, and Psalm 114 echoes it in an almost playful way.

Isaiah 55:1-11 contains a whole theology of providence, grace, and God's vision for us in an everlasting covenant. The people suffered exile when they abandoned their covenant with the Lord and worshiped the gods of mammon, and injustice followed. Verse 2 describes the kingdom's riches that God wants us to enjoy, in contrast to our pursuit of things that never satisfy—surely a message for us chasers of affluence. What place do generosity and the pursuit of justice have for those given new life through Jesus' resurrection? Some in our churches consider themselves solid Christians, but their lives are thoroughly wrapped up in pursuing the American dream, so they lack any real sense of giving themselves for those who are poor and hungry. Their shallowness is "rich in things and poor in soul," as the hymn 'God of Grace and God of Glory' reminds us.



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Luke 24:1-12 tells us that a group of women are the first to enter the empty tomb and hear the news that Jesus has risen. When they report this to the disciples, it's greeted as an "idle tale"—after all, aren't women easily taken in? But God reserves this special honor for those who are dishonored. Why are we surprised?

Of all today's texts, Romans 6:3-11 presents the most full-blown theology of the resurrection. The imagery unites Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection with our baptism. As verses 6 and 7 focus on our death to sin (in baptism), verses 4 and 11 tell of our resurrection to a new life in Christ that we are asked to seize and live out. This opens all the ways we are now able to be alive to God in Christ Jesus. Christians almost instinctively focus on immediate, personal behavior in this regard, as well they should, but few grasp that love involves seeking justice for others. We are alive to God in too restricted a fashion. God wants us to celebrate this life so much more fully, in ways that enable others to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8).

When Christ calls us, he bids us to come and die, writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer.<sup>1</sup> We especially remember this when grace seems cheap. But the greater truth is that in doing so he bids us to *come and live*. A friend of mine, Arne Sovik, had a long and distinguished career as professor of religion and Asian studies at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, where he helped launch and guide an international studies program that sends most St. Olaf students abroad for part of their studies. In retirement one of his activities was to make book-ends from the timber of old buildings being renovated at St. Olaf; he gave the bookends away as Christmas gifts to anyone who agreed to contribute \$25 to world relief or advocacy against hunger. Over the years he has sent thousands of dollars to Bread for the World from this activity alone. When I expressed amazement at his achievements during his (then) eighty-five years, Sovik told me how blessed his life has been. He said that from the time he was a young boy, his father always greeted him with the words (in Norwegian), "Are you saying yes to life, my son?" Are we saying yes to life? Yes to the Lord of life? To our new life in the risen Christ? To the world that God created and sent his Son to save? To our gifts? To the needs and opportunities that surround us? To the cries of poor people?<sup>2</sup>

Even some U.S. churches, usually more reflective of our affluent culture than of Christ, have discovered that they can rise with Christ to newness of life. In *Living More*

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<sup>1</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963) 94.

<sup>2</sup> I explore these themes more in my book *How Much Is Enough? Hungering for God in an Affluent Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003).



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*Simply*,<sup>3</sup> Ron Sider tells of Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Wichita, Kansas. Designs for a new sanctuary were set aside when a devastating earthquake struck Guatemala and a layperson posed a simple question: “How can we set out to buy an ecclesiastical Cadillac when our brothers and sisters in Guatemala have just lost their little Volkswagen?” So they borrowed money and rebuilt twenty-six churches and twenty-eight pastors’ homes. Eastminster Presbyterian came alive with a new sense of global mission, transforming lives on several continents.

### *Children’s Time*

Draw (or cut out) a picture of a caterpillar on one side of a sheet and a butterfly on the other. Show each and ask what it is. How did the caterpillar become a butterfly? We are like that caterpillar, but God has given us a new life. Unlike the caterpillar, we may still look the same on the outside, but inside we are being transformed. How? Make the link to baptism and Jesus’ resurrection. Then link the new life with works of love and justice, and show how doing so extends God’s love and life to others.

### *Musical Suggestions*

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today—*Lutheran Book of Worship* 151

I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I Am, Lord)—*Banquet of Praise* 129

God of Grace and God of Glory— *Banquet of Praise* 175

I Saw the People Gathered— *Banquet of Praise* 151

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year C

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<sup>3</sup>Ron Sider, ed., *Living More Simply* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1980) 12–13.