

**Easter 2020
St Paul's Church
Rev. Tambria E. Lee**

**May only God's Word Be Spoken and only God's Word
Heard. Amen.**

In the Nurenburg war crime trials a witness appeared who had lived for a time in a grave in a Jewish cemetery in Vilna Poland...He shared on the stand that it was the only place he and many others could live without detection after they had escaped the camps. During this time of living in the grave he wrote poetry and one of the poems was a description of birth. In a grave nearby a young Jewish woman gave birth to a boy. The eighty year old gravedigger wrapped in a white linen shroud assisted. When the newborn child uttered the first cry the old man prayed: Great God, hast thou finally sent the Messiah to us? For who else than the Messiah himself can be born in a grave?

Who else than the Messiah himself can be born in a grave? Today our Messiah who was born in a barn gives birth to us from the grave. Hail Thee Festival Day we sing....Jesus Christ is Risen today we sing....So concrete is this that some churches keep the reserve sacrament in the baptismal font.It is a provocative image of the link between death and life echoed in Paul's letter to the Romans, and again in the passage from Colossians. "For you have died and your life is hidden in Christ's with God." "Do you not know that all

of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” said Paul? *We seem always to be hovering in this world between the grave and the font...climbing out of one and washing in the other.* Sometimes it is as simple as going back and forth to doctor’s appointments looking for what is wrong with us or someone we love. Sometimes it is being trapped in situations that take all the life from us leaving us starving and longing for satisfaction. Sometimes it is assuming that the ordinary days of our lives with the ordinary people in them are not enough and we want excitement or relief from the tedium. In this last month we all have been doing a lot of hand wringing and hand washing and wondering out loud the “what if’s” ...but the question remains : Who but the Messiah can crawl into our graves and raise us up to a new life that matters always?

You I have been living between the now and the not yet...caught in a world not of our own making, wondering what is around the corner and asking ourselves where God is in the midst of our never ending Lent. What does it mean to be in relationship with the living God now when every morning that we awake we wonder if today will be our last ordinary day? Will we or someone we love get sick. Is this over reaction or underreaction? We are caught in an eddy...one of those places in the river where the current is strong and you are going no where fast...almost going around and around in a circle.

But... Here’s what I know about those places. You need help to get out of them. God is that help....a very

present help in time of trouble...and for the one who calls him Savior and Lord.....the only death that matters in this life is the one that we die at our baptism.

We are drowned in those waters and raised up to breathe freely for the first time. We can learn because of those waters to breath in places where we might think breathing is no longer possible. God goes down with us and breathes life back into us...the Ruach of the Holy Spirit as if we were lying on the beach having just been pulled unconscious from an undertow. He will follow us wherever we go and he asks us to follow him wherever he goes...even through the cross.

We are never ever alone and I ask you this day to make a conscious effort to claim that truth and then to ask what am being called to give birth too in the graves of my life? Today is the day that tells us that even at the grave we make a song.

Resurrection takes many forms but it always involves a watery grave. The Messiah often will show up in the graveyard of our lives and in so doing forever mingle the sacred with the profane. I challenge you to find those places. Schools shut... yes but the media platform Zoom gives it technology free to educational systems and people are learning at home. People all over the world are bringing out their grandmother's Singer sewing machines and are making masks for health care workers. Those with resources are sharing them if the number of people who have been leaving checks at St Pauls in the mailbox for those in need are any indication... others still are gathering food for the same

and delivering it on a schoolbus for children who otherwise would have gone hungry. People are sharing really funny stuff that makes you belly laugh even if you just spent the last hour in despair... gallows humor with a dose of joy is part of it.... share that good news of how even at the grave we doing our dead best to make a song...and one worth singing...

Look and listen to your own lives as if your survival depended on it... for Today you are witnesses of these things as we celebrate the mystery of the passion of our God...for who but the messiah can be born from a grave?