

Sermon Easter Vigil
Year C, 2025
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New Heart: Ezekiel 36:24-28

Thus says the Lord God... I will sprinkle clean water upon you...A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; ... I will put my spirit within you,....

Tonight we hear God's promise of a gift for God's people of long ago, proclaimed through the words of the Prophet Ezekiel. God promises to gather God's people from their far-off places, to renew them and bring them home.

Tonight we hear God's promise of a gift for all people, and God's gift for US, proclaimed through the words of the Prophet Ezekiel. God promises to gather us from all *our* far-off places, to renew *us*, and to bring *us* home.

Thus says the Lord God... I will sprinkle clean water upon you...

In a few minutes we will welcome two of God's chosen people, Ryan Trumbauer and Esme Schwebach, to ritually enter their True Home in God, as members with us in the Body of Christ, through the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Tonight we will ***sprinkle clean water upon them...*** a small and simple, yet *visible* sign, of the mighty and miraculous, yet *invisible* transformation God is already at work bringing forth within them.

Thus says the Lord God... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you...I will put MY SPIRIT within you.

Today we were blessed with a surprising reminder...this sprinkling falls on all without distinction—as baptismal waters coming up from the font, and as rain and snow falling down from the sky.

God's mighty promise was not only for the people of Israel in 6th century Babylon, long ago and far away. God's mighty promise is not only for Esme and Ryan. God's mighty promise is for all of **us**, and for all who dare to desire it. Here and now. Always and everywhere.

Though it might feel like it's been a lot longer, it was only last night that many of us gathered here, in this place, for our Good Friday Liturgy. We gathered to remember a story together—the story of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. According to the Gospel of John, at the moment of his death:

Jesus said "It is finished." And, with that, he bowed his head and gave over his spirit.

In his first newborn cries, Jesus was breathing God's Spirit into the world. With every healing word he spoke and every parable he shared, with the Kingdom he proclaimed, Jesus was breathing God's Spirit into the world. And in his final dying breath, Jesus was breathing God's Spirit into the world finally, completely, entirely, unreservedly.

Thus says the Lord God... I will sprinkle clean water upon you...A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you...I will put MY SPIRIT within you.

God promises to give a New Heart and a New Spirit to God's people. This is a gift of eternal, infinite, immeasurable value. God gives this gift freely. And yet this gift comes at a very high cost, for those who dare to desire and choose to accept it.

(You might be asking yourself) How can this be? How can a gift be utterly free and extraordinarily costly at the same time? Here's the deal:

The New Heart God gives us is part of God's own heart. Which means our New Heart will be broken again and again by the pain, sin, and suffering of this world.

The cost is great, but the reward is greater still since our New Heart—because it is part of God’s heart— will have the capacity for more love, more hope, more courage, more faith than is humanly possible.

In the same way, the New Spirit God gives us is part of God’s own Spirit, the Spirit of Creation, the Spirit of Life that enlivens all things. Which means we can no longer pretend that our life is ours, alone. We can never again imagine that our own life and flourishing is disconnected from the life and flourishing of every other person and part of Creation.

The cost is indeed great, but the reward is greater still since our New Spirit—because it is part of God’s Spirit—will be more powerful and creative and resilient than anything we can imagine. Spirit unbounded by time, or space, or even death. Life abundant. Life eternal.

*Thus says the Lord God... **I will sprinkle clean water upon you...A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; ...I will put my spirit within you....***

God has given over God’s Heart and God’s Spirit in Jesus.

In Baptism we accept this Spirit and Heart as our own.

Tonight we are invited—with Ryan and Esme— to celebrate and experience anew the Power of God

The Power that raised Jesus up from Death to New Life.

Tonight we are invited—with Ryan and Esme— to celebrate and experience anew the Power of God

The Power that raises us up from Death to New Life

And enables us to live ever more fully and broadly and deeply

into this New Life together,

With all of the pain, and all of the power

that comes with sharing the Heart and the Spirit of God.

