

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

308 West 5th St., St. Ansgar, IA 50472

641-713-4782

Pastor Mark Squire



The Vigil of Easter

19 April Anno Domini 2025

The Vigil of Easter Service

Holy Saturday, April 19, 2025

Weather permitting, the Service will begin outside.

Service of Light

Invocation

P. "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

C. "Amen."

P. "Beloved in the Lord, on this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, we are gathered here in vigil and prayer. This is the Passover of the Lord in which, by hearing His Word and celebrating His Sacraments, we share in His victory over death."

P. Let us pray.

"O God, You are like a refiner's fire, and Your Spirit enkindles the hearts of Your faithful people with the fire of Your love. Bless, we implore You, this new flame and those who keep this joyful Easter festival that, burning with desire for life with You, we may be found rightly prepared to share in the Feast of Light which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever."

C. "Amen."

The paschal candle is presented.

P. "Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever, the beginning and the ending."

"The Alpha and the Omega"

(Greek letters are traced)

"His are time and eternity; His are the glory and dominion, now and forever."

(The year 2025 is traced.)

"By His wounds we have healing both now and forever. Amen."

(Five wax nails are put into the candle.)

"May the light of Christ, who is risen in glory from the dead, scatter all the darkness of our hearts and minds."

(The paschal candle is lit from the newly kindled fire.)

P. "Let us pray.

Almighty and most merciful God, pour out on us Your abundant blessing that all who in true faith share this night in joyful celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead may be filled with Your heavenly benediction. Once we were in darkness, but now we are in the Light, even Jesus Christ, our Lord."

C. "Amen."

(Congregation lights their candles and enters the darkened sanctuary.)

P. "The Light of Christ."

C. "Thanks be to God."

P. "The Light of Christ."

C. "Thanks be to God."

P. "The Light of Christ."

C. "Thanks be to God."

Easter Proclamation

P. (chanted) - "Rejoice now, all you heav'nly choirs of angels; rejoice now, all creation; sound forth, trumpet of salvation, and proclaim the triumph of our King. Rejoice too, all the earth, in the radiance of the light now poured upon you and made brilliant by the brightness of the everlasting King; know that the ancient darkness has been forever banished. Rejoice, O Church of Christ, clothed in the brightness of this light; let all this house of God ring out with rejoicing, with praises of all God's faithful people."

Spoken Responses

P. The Lord be with you.

C. And also with you.

- P. Lift up your hearts.
C. We lift them to the Lord.
- P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
C. It is right to give Him thanks and praise.
- P. It is truly good, right and salutary
 one God, now and forever.
C. Amen.
 (extinguish candles)

Service of Readings, Hymns, & Prayers

The Creation -

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. And God made the two great lights - the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night - and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds - livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for

food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

P. "This is the Word of the Lord."

C. "Thanks be to God."

P. "Let us pray.

Almighty God, through Your Word and Spirit You most wonderfully created all things, and through the Word made flesh You brought new life to fallen humanity. Grant that in Your mercy we may be conformed to the image of Him who shares fully in our humanity, even Jesus Christ, our Lord."

C. "Amen."

Hymn "God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven" - verses 1, 4 # 877

The Flood -

Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature.

They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in. The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.

But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out. Then God said to Noah, "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh - birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth - that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your off-spring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth.

I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

P. "This is the Word of the Lord."

C. "Thanks be to God."

P. "Let us pray.

O Lord, You kill and You raise to life; You brought the flood upon a wicked and perverse generation, and yet You saved faithful Noah and his family in the ark. Keep us in safety in the ark of Christ's body, the Church, that Your mercy may come to its fullness and Your salvation be preached to the Ends of the earth, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

C. "Amen."

Hymn "All Christians Who Have Been Baptized" - verses 1-3 # 596

Israel's Deliverance at the Red Sea

Exodus 14:10 - 15:1

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

The LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen."

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

Israel's Joy and Restoration -**Ezekiel 36:24-28**

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

P. "This is the Word of the Lord."

C. "Thanks be to God."

P. "Let us pray."

Look in mercy, O Lord, upon Your faithful people, and by Word and Spirit bring to completion that good work which You have begun in us. Gather in Your people that all the world may see and know that what has been cast down is raised up and what has grown old is made new, until the work You have begun in us is brought to its joyful fulfillment in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. "Amen."

The Fiery Furnace -**Daniel 3:1-30**

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."

Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king,

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was

astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?"

They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego come out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

P. "This is the Word of the Lord."

C. "Thanks be to God."

P. "Let us pray. O God, Your Son protected faithful Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace of the king. Grant us protection in our time of testing that we would boldly confess Your name, reject all false worship, and live and die in confidence, knowing that we are safe in Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever."

C. "Amen."

Hymn

"All You Works of the Lord"

931

Service of Holy Baptism

(Hymnal - page 268)

P. "On this holiest of nights . . .

. . . dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

P. "Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God . . . through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C. Amen.

P. "Do you renounce the devil?"

C. "Yes, I renounce him."

P. "Do you renounce all his works?"

C. "Yes, I renounce them."

P. "Do you renounce all his ways?"

C. "Yes, I renounce them."

P. "Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?"

C. "Yes, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

P. "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son?"

C. "Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose

again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead."

P. "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?"

C. "Yes, I believe in the Holy Spirit the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, The forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

P. "Let us pray." "The almighty God and Father . . .

C. "Amen."

Service of Prayer

The Litany of the Resurrection

(Congregation responds to each petition with "Have mercy".)

Service of the Word

Easter Acclamation

P. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C. He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn "Come You Faithful, Raise the Strain" - verses 3-4 # 487

Salutation and Collect

P. The Lord be with you.

C. And also with you.

P. The gospel of St. John, the 20th chapter.

C. Glory to You, O Lord.

Gospel Reading (stand)

John 20:1-18

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?

Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father,

to my God and your God." Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" - and that he had said these things to her.

P. This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C. Praise to You, O Christ.

Service of the Sacrament

pages 194-202

Distribution Hymn "At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing" # 633

Nunc Dimittis - Song of Simeon page 199

Closing Prayer

Closing Hymn "He is Arisen! Glorious Word" # 488

Communion Statement

The Lord's Supper is being celebrated in our service today. In Christian love we ask anyone who is not a communicant member in good standing of an LCMS congregation to speak with the pastor before attending the Lord's Supper.

Bulletin Cover Art Explanation – 'Full of Eyes' Artist Christopher Powers

Isaiah 26:19: "You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead." *Isaiah 26:18-19:* "...we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth . . . Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead."

What caught my attention here was the repeated birth motif.

First Israel presents their sufferings as a woman in her birth pangs. Yet those pangs lead to nothing, Israel seems to give birth to the "wind" - no lasting deliverance is achieved, the enemies of God's people are not defeated . . . It seems that the historic agonies of the people of God have been for naught; the great promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - the promise given to David of a king who reigns in peace - the promise even given to Noah or Adam of a world subdued under the reign of God-fearing humanity. . . all of these seem to have failed. There was struggle, there was agony, there were "birth pangs," but no child has been born (Is.9:6). Has Israel failed?

That is where we are left in verse 18, but then verse 19 introduces a eucatastrophic turn - "your dead shall live. . ." In other words, the agonies of this birthing process will not have been in vain. Beyond all anticipation or hope, YHWH will bring His people through even death and they will "awake and sing for joy." But then we come to the passage that clearly links the failures of Israel's history (imaged as a fruitless birth in v.18) with the eucatastrophic victory that YHWH intends to work through them—namely, verse 19b. "...*the earth will give birth to the dead.*" Perhaps Israel's historic struggles seem only to have given birth to emptiness and futility, but the Lord's plan does not die with them. A miraculous birth will happen, a birth that will make all the struggles of all God's people from all ages and nations meaningful; a birth that—as with human birth—will swallow the preceding pains up into its own joy (John 16:20-22). And what will this birth be? The Resurrection from the dead.

The language of the passage seems to link the birth of the resurrection with the birth pains of Israel's history...perhaps alluding to the fact that, though their birthing agonies seemed fruitless (ending with them enslaved to the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, and finally the Romans), they were actually the pangs that brought about the true birth, the resurrection from the dead. And how did Israel's seemingly fruitless birth pains bring about the resurrection? Because her redemptive-historic agonies are the process by which God brought His eternal Son into the world. Jesus Christ - God with us - is the fruit of the birth-agonies of God's people, He is the Son born to her in her old age, as it were, the Son by whom she is saved through the bearing (1 Timothy 2:15). And yet, in another sense - even as He is the fruit of the birth pains of God's people through the ages - He Himself is also the one who bears the climactic agonies of birth. Yes, in Jesus Christ, YHWH Himself endures the shattering pangs of birth; on Calvary, YHWH Himself "will cry out like a woman in labor; [He will] gasp and pant" (Isaiah 42:14) as He endures in His own body the wracking pains of the New Creation's birth.

And when the labor is done His lifeless body is laid in the womb of the earth and he rests on the Sabbath from all the work of creation. And on the third day "out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied" (Is.53:11). Yes, on the third day the One who endured the pains of New Creation's birth will Himself become the firstborn of that New Creation, the firstborn from among the dead, the first of those who dwell in the dust to awake and sing for joy. The resurrection of Jesus Christ - His "birth" from the long-closed and barren womb of the earth - is the beginning of the New Creation, it is the true birth for which the people of God - and ultimately God himself - have labored since the beginning.

With this birth, all things are renewed, because ALL THINGS are from, through, and to, sustained by and summed up in Jesus Christ....so when He rises from the dead, we can be sure that all things in Him will be raised up as well - first elect humanity in Him, and then all of creation in them. And so, the agonies of God's people were not in vain, they gave birth to the Messiah (Rev.12:1-6ff), in whom God Himself has given birth to the New Creation in which His glory covers all things as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).