

May 4 2014

Scripture Lessons ~ *Psalm 116*

1 Peter 1:17-23

John 21:1-19

Sermon *Beam Me Up, Scotty!*

I can tell a fisherman wrote this because they said 153 fish, not 152 not 154 but 153, and they were probably fudging anyway.

This is an old Gaelic prayer that I find very meaningful. Let's bow our heads and pray together; As the hand is made for holding, and the eye for seeing, you have fashioned me for joy. Share with me the vision that you will find it everywhere in the wild violets beauty and the larks melody, in the face of a steadfast person, in a child's smile, in a mother's love, in the purity of Jesus. Amen

They had a group at the conference meeting, that they called Geeks for Christ. I am kind of a Geek for Christ too, although I have none of the technical skills that go along with the Geek part. I do have a confession for those that don't know me that well, I am a terrible 'trekkie', I am a fan of Star Trek, especially that original series with Captain Kirk and Spoke and the whole group. As I mentioned before in a couple of other sermons, I am also a fan of interesting bumper stickers. And one of my favorite bumper stickers is a Star Trek bumper sticker, is Beam Me Up, Scotty!, there is no intelligent life down here.

Now unfortunately our yearly celebration of Easter can come sort of like a trip to one of those alien planets. Excitement bubbles, anticipation of finding something different, something truly life changing, builds during this whole period of Easter. Then we truly do treasure Easter with all of its mystery and all of its beauty and its promises for life and for a fresh start. But then Monday rolls around, Monday with its responsibilities of work, home and school, and the problems that we left there on Friday, might still be there on Monday. For the first week or two that is okay, we are still riding high on that Easter excitement, but then we are getting

into the time now after the second week that we might not be fairing quite as well, our enthusiasm might begin to weaken, our joy to be a bit diminished, and soon Easter and all it means might become a distant might become a distant memory rather than a true reality in our lives. The newness of it all wears off, with that trip to the alien planet from that Star Trek episode and we may be ready whether Captain Kirk said it or not, to say these words, ‘Beam me up Scotty! There are no signs of intelligent life anywhere around here.

Now once the reality of Jesus resurrection becomes this far removed in our daily living, also opportunities for destructive attitudes a behaviors can open up for us. Old fears, old doubts, guilt’s, anxieties, those old prejudices that we can’t quite let go of, return to their former place in our lives. Old habits that we thought we had cast off a long time ago, once again kind of creep in and take control of our life. And then life becomes business as usual. And it is difficult to see from the way that we live, we believe that Christ has risen at all. Our gospel lesson from this morning takes us into a similar situation in the lives of several of Jesus’s disciples. And their situation seems all that much worse, because they had actually seen the resurrected Jesus. Prior to this passage in John, Jesus had not only shown himself, first of all to the women at the tomb after the resurrection, but he had also appeared in the flesh in the midst of the disciples two different times in Jerusalem, and on the second of these instances Thomas had even put his fingers into his wound to prove that Jesus was there. But even after seeing and touching and talking with Jesus, Thomas and Peter and 5 other disciples grew so discouraged that they returned to their native land of Galilee. If there had ever been a significance of the resurrection to their lives it had long since been crowded out by those daily realities of life, crowded out by business as usual. I suppose the aim of going back was to get so involved in fishing that it would that it would take their minds off their disappointment. There is nothing wrong with a good diversion in the midst in the time of loses, that diversion for us doesn’t become an escape. Unfortunately it seems that it becomes that just for the disciples in this situation. Even for them the new life in Jesus had worn thin, and

they in danger of losing that enthusiasm and that direction Jesus had given to each one of them before his death.

And this I see as the first lesson from this passage, in the Easter season. And it comes to us in the form of a warning, and that warning is this warning. Even this close, only a couple of weeks out from the joy of Easter, when work becomes demanding, and home problems still persist, and bills keep flowing in, and health problems don't completely go away, the temptation for us will be to cave, cave into pressure and go back to business as usual. Beware of that time coming. But there is a second lesson to be found in that passage, and that one is a message of comfort and hope in the midst of temptation that I just described. And that message comes just at the point in the story where the disciples are most discouraged in their lives. They had been out fishing all night, which was the custom in their day, and they had caught nothing, not one thing. Those who fish for pleasure know exactly that is like, so you can imagine how discouraged the disciples were because fishing was their livelihood. Now they were back to the shore tired and hungry when a man called to them from the beach, and when they said no, he replied go back and cast your nets on the right side of the boat and you will catch some fish. They did as the man directed them and found that they did find fish, and enormous number, 153; and it was at that point that they recognized that the man on the beach was Jesus. The hope and comfort I see here then is in the fact was that Jesus was present at the time when the disciples were at their lowest point after the resurrection. And the first part of the story warns us of those times of discouragement, the second one promises us in Jesus and in our lowest times of life there is hope. His message to us when Easter seems so far away is a yes message, Yes I am still here, Yes I am still alive, Yes sin and death are still defeated, Yes your sins are still forgiven, so have hope, for in me you still have eternal life. There is a third lesson to be learned from the passage, and that third lesson is a challenge. You can't leave without a challenge. Jesus challenges his disciples to do two different things, and they have experienced his presence one more time. The first challenge comes with Jesus points out that large school of fish on the right side of the boat, and the disciples finally, finally recognize him. Now it is clear

for me, that he was standing there the whole time for them to see that those fish were right under their noses I think that whole time too. But they were so caught up in their discouragement that they were blinded to the thing that they were looking for in the first place. The lesson to us then is to look around and see signs of the resurrection, signs of the intelligent life if you like in the midst of our lives because if we don't look carefully then we are going to miss them. Those engaging aspects of work and school, and there are engaging aspects of work and school. Those wonderful people all around us, the beautiful world we have just been singing about, and celebrate each time we go out into the spring. Who could deny the resurrection on a glorious spring day? And so be encouraged to look for those things, because if we don't look we are going to miss the wonder of the risen Lord Jesus. But there is a second challenge, and this one comes to us at the end of the lesson of John's gospel, and at that portions Jesus tells Peter, that if you love me you will 'feed my sheep', in other words if you see the power of the resurrection all around in your life, you will do my work, you will feed those who are hungry, you will embrace who are outcasts, you will provide healing for those that are hurt, and preaching and teaching of God's love . Hear then Jesus teaches us to not only look around, and not sit on our duffs, and see the signs of the resurrection, signs of intelligent life, but we are to be a verb, we are to be the power of the signs of resurrection, in the lives of people all around us. Certainly there is reason to be careful in the weeks that lie ahead, because there is always danger taking hold in our lives. But if we take today's lesson seriously we have to also be of good courage because Jesus has not left us alone, and we are first to watch in the days ahead for those signs of the risen Jesus all around us in our daily lives, but we are also encouraged to take that extra step more than just watch, we are encouraged to be a sign of the risen Jesus in just one other person's life in the course of this week. And together we say, Amen.