

April 18, 2010

Scripture: John 21: 1-19

Sermon: "Feed My Lambs"

Our Scripture leaves us in an interesting spot: after Easter and not yet Pentecost. We know that the disciples have seen the risen Lord. We know that the disciples have seen the wounds from the cross. We know that the disciples believe. We know all these things But...we also know that they aren't exactly living out their calling as disciples. We know that They aren't exactly going out to all the nations and making disciples. We know that They aren't exactly sharing the Good News. We know that They aren't exactly living out the Gospel message as the Body of Christ here on earth.

After Easter and not yet Pentecost. during this time, They are waiting. They are sitting around wondering. They are staring off in space. They are just there. The disciples are stuck in this here but not yet existence. They aren't moving forward but they aren't going back. They aren't really doing anything. They are just here, waiting, wondering.

Here but not yet at the place where we are going to be. A strange existence. Yet It is place we can all relate because we have all been a part or have lived through this interesting little spot. Life happens: weddings, retirements, new jobs, graduations, and we know that each of these experiences changes us. Each of these experiences transforms us. we are not the same as before yet we are not who or where we are going to be in the future. we are left in this state of here but not yet. It is a very frustrating place to be. It is a very frightening place to be. This new reality is a different existence than the one we knew before and we are just not sure how things are going to go or be in this new state of reality. We only know that we can't go back to the way things used to be because we have been changed, because we are different, because that part of our life is done, because we simply can't and more importantly don't want to return to our "old lives." We know that there is something more, something more we are called to do and be...but what? Who? When? How?

And that is where we find the disciples in our Scripture today. They are all waiting, wondering, watching the clock tick. Here but not yet. They know that Jesus promised them God's peace. They know that Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit. They know that Jesus promised a new life because they have experienced the risen Christ. But when? How? What?

When's it all going to start? What will be the "sign" that they will be given to let them know to begin living this new reality? How is it going to happen? What will they do or be in this new reality? And so they wait in this here but not yet existence. Wondering what does this new reality hold for them? Wondering What does this new period of time hold for them? Wondering What are they supposed to do with themselves now?

And as they sit around and wait, The disciples are Getting more and more anxious with each passing moment. Getting more and more frightened with each passing moment. Getting more and more frustrated with each passing moment. They are stuck in this here but not yet existence with lots of questions but no answers. A very frustrating, frightening place. So they do what we all do. They go back to the familiar. They try to go back to their routines.

They try to slip back into some sort of rhythm for their life. That rhythm, that routine, that familiar part in the unknown is fishing. They go back to their existence before: before Jesus, before the miracles, before the teachings before the cross, before the empty tomb. Just imagine it: In this room as the disciples are waiting, Peter, always impulsive, always rash, always just a little too quick, all of a sudden yells out: "I'm tired of this waiting around. I'm going to go crazy if I keep sitting around here waiting. I'm going fishing. I have got to do something. I just can't sit here anymore." And after a few moments pass, after the disciples collect themselves after Peter's outburst, after the shock wears off, conversation starts up again. Maybe Peter is right. What else are we going to do? And so a few others decide to tag along.

So they gather up their nets once more, pull them out of storage, shake the dust off the fishing gear, put the boat back into the water after it has sat on the dry land all this time, and they venture back out onto the water.

And once out on the water, they realize this is nice. this is routine. This is what they know. This is what they did before their lives were turned upside down, before they met the man that changed them and transformed their lives. It was what they did before they decided to follow him.

After a while they start to find a routine. Peter throws the nets over the side of the boat. Andrew marks the spot. Thomas figures out the direction of the wind. This feels right.

And it is in this comfortable, seemingly right moment, that they begin to ask themselves, "Why did we ever leave this? This is safe. This is what we know. Maybe we were fooling ourselves, thinking we could be Jesus' disciples. Maybe we were fooling ourselves, thinking we could make a difference. Why did we ever leave? It's safe. It's comfortable. It's logical. It's stable... Yea, but... we wouldn't have gotten to see all those miracles. We wouldn't have gotten to experience the resurrection. We wouldn't have gotten to experience Jesus.

And then they begin to share stories. Remember that time when...Jesus healed Jarius' daughter. Remember that time when...Jesus fed all those people with just five loaves and two fishes. Remember that time when...Jesus taught in the Temple. Remember that time when...Jesus washed our feet. Remember that time when...Jesus came to us and show us the wounds from the cross. Remember that time when...

And the disciples slip into silence, peaceful silence, remembering reflecting, re-living all those acts, all those teachings, all those words...

The day turns into night and night turns into day. And They fish all night but by the morning, there is nothing. No fish. Their nets are empty. Remember that time when...Didn't this happen before? And as they pull onto the shore, they see a stranger...Haven't we done this before? and the stranger asks, You couldn't catch anything could you? Why don't you try the other side? Doesn't this seem familiar? Haven't they been here before? Haven't they done this before? So they drop the nets on the other side and the disciples struggle to bring in the nets because they are so full. A familiar moment for the disciples. A familiar call for the disciples. A familiar feeling for the disciples. They have been here before. They have done this before. And then they remember. And then they see. Suddenly it clicks. And then they find meaning. they see the

familiar face of Jesus. They see that Jesus has cooked them breakfast. They see that their Lord has spread out a feast. They see the table and they understand the invitation for them to come to the table and eat.

It is all so familiar for the disciples but not quite the same. They remember their callings. They remember Jesus' teachings. They remember Jesus' words. They remember that night in the upper room when Jesus gave them the nourishment of the bread and the cup and said that this is a new covenant. It is all so familiar but not quite the same. They remember his last words to them. They remember his last act as their master, how he tenderly took their feet and washed them and how he said, this is how you are to care for my children, this is how you are to serve my children.

Suddenly it all clicks. Suddenly, this here but not yet reality has meaning because they meet Jesus once again. In this new here but not yet existence, the disciples are surrounded by God's peace. In this waiting familiar moment, the disciples are reminded of God's promise to be there with them on their journey. In this new transformed and changed reality, they understand that they have been changed and that they have been given a calling to be the Body of Christ here on earth, serving all of God's children.

After breakfast, Jesus turns to Peter and says "Peter, Do you love me?" Once again, a familiar scene flashes for Peter. The night in the upper room where Peter swears that he will be by Jesus' side and Jesus tells him that Peter will deny him three times. "Peter, Do you love me?" Yes, Lord you know that I love you. "Feed my lambs" Peter, do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. "Tend my sheep." Peter do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. "Feed my sheep."

In this new reality, Jesus meets the disciples once more, and gives their lives meaning. In this new reality, Jesus reminds them that things are no longer the same and that they can't go back to the ways things used to be. They are changed. They have been transformed. They are now people of the resurrection who have experienced the risen Christ.

familiar moments, even the familiar acts, even the familiar words have taken on new meaning. The resurrection and the experience of meeting the Risen Christ changes everything.

Do you Love me? Feed my lambs. Haven't we heard these words before? They seem so familiar but through the lens of the resurrection, we understand that we are changed, that we have experienced new life, that we have experienced the breadth and depth of God's love. We understand that There is a world that is hurting out there. We cannot close it off. We must take God's love and God's grace out there for all who are lost and lonely. We must take God's peace and God's comfort out there for all who are hopeless and afraid. We must take God's light of mercy out into the world that is covered by darkness.

Do you love me? Tend my sheep. We remember our calling. We remember the Gospel message. We remember when...Jesus first came into our lives. We remember when Jesus first claimed us. We remember when...Jesus first showed us God's love.

Do you love me? Feed my sheep. It's all so familiar: the words, the actions, the stories. And in the familiar, we understand that God is working in the world. And we are called to take an active part in that work, that We have the promises of God's hope and God's peace. We have the promises of God's comfort and love to go with us on our journeys. We have the promises of God's mercy and God's justice to strengthen us on our way.

Do you love me? Feed my lambs.

Do you love me? Tend my sheep.

Do you love me? Feed my sheep.

May we hear God's promises in the familiar and go out into the world to share God's promises with all. Amen.