

Sunday, April 10, 2016

Acts 9:1-6

John 21:1-19

Worshiping God with Adoration and Praise

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Jesus is alive and is worthy of all our praise, joy, time and life! And because Jesus is alive we have a church in which we may gather to grow in relationship with the Risen Christ and with each other. Throughout this season of Easter we will focus on the 5 purposes of the church and our focus today is Worshiping God with Adoration and Praise.

Before the fishing trip. Simon Peter and the other disciples are hanging out together in fear just as they have been for a couple of weeks. They are afraid to leave in case the Roman soldiers suspect them for stealing Jesus' body and telling others that he rose from death. They are worried for their lives. But they are also getting tired of sitting around and waiting to see what will happen to them. So Simon Peter tells the others there- I'm going fishing. This was a natural choice— not to sit on a dock with a fishing line, but because Simon Peter was a commercial fisherman he wanted to do something useful and what he could. The others decide to go with him. They fish at night; all night and early in the morning they head back to shore knowing that they have caught nothing.

Early in the morning they are heading back to shore-their fish nets are empty, their attitudes down, and the weariness on their faces almost as grim as their catch. They are ready to get out of the boat, go home, have a shower and then a good sleep. But then something happens. A friendly voice from the shore calls out and asks if they have any fish. Maybe it was a fish salesman—looking to buy fish for his market? "No" they shout back.

The man on the shore tells them to go out again and throw the net on the right side of the boat. You can almost hear the fishermen grumbling—now how is that going to make a difference – putting the net on the other side? Fish swim and if they don't get into the net one side they can avoid the net on the other too! But the disciples are game to try. Why not? They don't have any fish to eat, or sell or do anything with. They did as the stranger said and their nets were so full they had a difficult time haul it in.

One of the disciples noticed that the person on the beach was not a stranger but the Lord. Simon Peter realized it too and immediately he jumped into the water and headed to shore. The other disciples headed to shore from within the boat and with the net full of fish.

Jesus was recognized and as the disciples got closer to shore they noticed he had a fire burning and wanted to cook the fish and have breakfast with them. They did and they had time with the Risen Lord.

In this story there is doubt, faith, loss of heart, encouragement, nothing and bounty. And this is just like the church.

The Christian church has been in existence for hundreds of years and through this story we can again understand why Jesus wants us to gather together regularly—to hear the proclamation of the written word of faithful people and in response to serve others

As individuals, we each come to church for certain reasons- to be with a group of friends we only see once in a while, to be with family, to become closer to our church family, and to worship God with adoration and praise because God is worthy. We come to hear stories of Jesus' love and how we might be like him in our every living. And we share with one another why we believe and what we experience as God's children. And many people come because they have doubts, are discouraged, are wondering what to do with the blessings they receive or they are seeking encouragement because they are lost, they are looking for friends in Jesus and they are listening to what the message is for them to day.

Many people are looking for their spirit to meet the Spirit of God so that their lives will be blest with bountiful gifts. And there are many who come just to come and complain because their hearts are not open to receive what God is continuing and trying to do.

Are we fulfilling the purpose of the church- to worship with adoration and praise knowing and believing that Jesus is alive? Are we growing in faith?

This is Scout Sunday and the youth and leaders have stated their promises but the challenge of course in this, is to live out these promises not just today or during their meetings and camps, but as they grow older and remember what is important in this life.

And learning how to fulfill promises, to carry out the purposes of the church on a regular basis is what we are all called to do. But are we doing it?

Saul was doing his job of rounding up Christians to be persecuted and killed when a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard Jesus' voice ask him, "Why do you persecute me?" Saul knew who it was and then he went into the city and did what he was told. This was the beginning of his transformation- he was to become Paul who spoke many times of his conversion to Christianity and how Jesus led his life. **Paul's story is filled with doubt, faith, loss of heart, encouragement, nothing and bounty. And this is just like the church.** And it is the church which brings people together to change lives because of the work of the Spirit moving amongst us.

There is something about experiencing the joy of the living Lord that unites us as Christians. But singing about the joy of being Christians is another special moment. Experiencing that moment together—is a gift, a memory to cherish and it is also something upon which we build our faith and our hope.

We can identify ourselves with either or both stories—we have doubts, losses, nothing and we can also be filled and renewed in faith, have hope restored and we may be blessed to the extent that our nets are full/ that we are overwhelmed with good things.

Jesus is alive and because of this—the nets were filled; Saul came to know Jesus. And we have gathered here to worship God who made all of it possible. All of it—enabling us to gather, to share our concerns our praise, our prayers and hope of healing. All of it: when we remember those who are grieving, celebrating wondering about tomorrow and celebrating yesterday. We are here in this place and time and because Jesus said, Feed my sheep. And Peter said, Yes Lord I love you. And Jesus responded Follow me.

We who worship here have answered the call of Jesus to "feed the sheep" to do so because of love and now it is up to all of us to "Follow." And to follow means to live as Jesus taught, to love others and tell His message just like Saul did once he was ready and shared his faith as Paul. Worship God with adoration and praise means sharing our belief in God in song, prayer and in hearing His word of hope and encouragement. It means listening to the Spirit speak to us and then

putting what we hear into action just as Jesus asked Peter. Feed my sheep—nurture them, show them correctly, encourage and love them.

We are called to do the same- and both ways as we care for one another and as we are cared for; as we are taught and teach, and as we are encouraged and do encourage others. We are called to love God just as we love others and are loved by others. It seems simple—but it takes all of our life to understand and do what Jesus asks: “Feed my sheep. And follow Him in faith.” Let us respond to His call to follow as we sing—“Here I AM Lord.”.