

Sunday, May 22, 2022 Easter 6 *“Listening Anew to Jesus”*

Revelation 21:10, 22 to 22:5 Acts 1:1-11 (Ascension of Jesus) John 14:23-29

(It is good to be back with you after having experienced sickness due to covid19. Although I test negative, the tiredness and need to sleep lingers! I pray for healing and the energy to return soon!)

Our theme for this season of Easter 2022 has been “Made New in Christ Jesus”. But why should we want to be made new? We spoke about everything being new and improved in order for you to buy the product being advertised but are YOU really needing to be new and improved? What was the old and stable you really like? Or is the desire of being made new in Christ because He is alive and has called you and each one of us to be re-energized, revitalized, redeemed and enlivened by His Spirit?

The simple answer is, Yes! We are in need of this this new way of living but what has been recurring in these last few years that has captured our attention more is what calls us to question who we are, what we say and what we will do or get others to do for us. These three words come to us because many people are experiencing weariness of all different types. And it is because others are more complacent than before; or often complaining about something or even finding themselves in more and more conflicts. Complacency has lead many people not to show interest in activities they once loved and are indifferent because ‘somebody else will do it anyway. Complaining about everything: you can read this in every newspaper or hear it on the news—complaining about matters not under their control, but needing their voice heard for whatever reason. Being in conflict just to be advocating for the opposite ideas of a discussion or topic or situation again because people are in need of being heard, sharing ideas and moving out of isolation into social settings.

Jesus understands all of this because he experienced it. One can only imagine what Jesus thought when he first saw the disciples after his resurrection. They did not fully believe he was alive. Even though Jesus told them that he would die and rise again they did not believe it. Yet after he rose from death, Thomas still wanted proof that it was really Jesus. His disciples

were unsure of what to do after Jesus rose from death. For three years they had travelled with him into and out of communities where Jesus had performed miracles, taught thousands of people and told of his pending death. But after he rose from death they were complacent about their next task. And what did they do? They went fishing because it was something they knew how to do and could experience less stress.

In these last two years we too have been wondering what our task is once 'things settle down with covid19', the task of being faithful to our call and response to Christ. For many people, the call to return to serving Christ in his church is conditional- when covid is done, when I get the energy, when I feel I'm ok- and even they got along without me so why should I. Well, Jesus needs you because many people have thought the same thing- Volunteerism is at an all time low; but the need for help is high. And People need Christ in their lives! So, what we need to do is to say come and be made new in Christ!

Complaining has been a difficult thing to counteract. We have reason to complain because of inflation- food costs, gas costs, even eating out costs yet we must remember that the world is experiencing new challenges in some areas and resurgence in others. Covid19 is spreading rapidly in North Korea, the war between Russia and Ukraine continues and people are seeking refuge for their lives, international trade is slow or at a standstill in some port cities and the cost of oil is due to its distribution methods. But, who are we complaining too? Each other, and will this make a difference?

Remember, when out of love Mary poured the fragrant oil over Jesus' feet? Who complained? Judas because that nard perfume could have been sold for a lot of money and boosted the treasury of the disciples. But Jesus told Judas to stop because what she did was a good thing as she acknowledged Jesus as Saviour before his death.

Conflicts were a part of Jesus' life with the disciples – between Jesus and his mother at the wedding feast; between the Pharisees and Jesus as he spoke and taught of God's love with an authority not known before. When the trial occurred and Pontius Pilate could not find any fault to have him killed. Yet the Pharisees were threatened by him and had him killed. But there were those amongst them, who believed he was the son of God sent to save people. This was another conflict but when Jesus died and was buried, there was some realization that Jesus truly was God's Son.

Jesus knew that one day he would be returning to God the Father in heaven. He spoke of this time with the disciples and promised that disciples that they would not be left desolate or orphaned. He also spoke about the peace that he would give to them. A peace that was different from the peace of the world. Then he said, "Don't be afraid. I am going to the Father because the Father is greater than I." Eventually Jesus ascended into heaven as he was lifted up with a cloud taking him out of their sight. What we know about heaven is a vision that John of Patmos experienced as recorded in Revelation. There is light everywhere and the river of life flowing from God's throne and the tree of life is there in its wonder. There is so much more than we can imagine!

With Jesus in heaven what were the disciples to do? They were to do what Jesus had told them to do throughout the time they shared. They were to tell His story, teach his words, lead others to believe and to invite people to become new creatures in Jesus. They were to go into the world and baptize people and welcome them into the fellowship of the church and continue to build up the ministry of Christ Jesus as the Saviour. They were not to be afraid for the spirit would come, lead and guide them they just needed to be patient for this to occur.

If we just reflect for a moment, we must realize that what we have been called to do in these post pandemic, post Christian era times. We are to hear again the words of Jesus- Don't be afraid. My peace I give to you not as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Listen to my voice as the sheep that you are. Follow me, share with one another in love and know that I am Jesus the Resurrection and the Life, the Good Shepherd and the Lamb, which died for your sake. Listen anew to the words of Jesus as he ascended into heaven: You are my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Have we really listened and heard Jesus words? Do we know our task? It is time to listen anew to Jesus and seek the Spirit's guidance as we reach out to those who are in need. Those who are complacent, complaining and in conflict as well as those who are hurting physically, mentally and socially. For Jesus' gift of peace is not just for some, but for everyone who believes. This is what the world needs as commodity prices rise due to input costs, as people are seeking a new way of living and looking for Someone to help and guide them through these difficult and challenging times. This Someone is Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Are we will to renew our faith and do the tasks of his disciples? Are we listening with new ears and hearing Jesus' call to follow without fear? Are we listening as we grow in grace and know that we have been blessed by God? Jesus spoke and taught us to love others. Let us listen anew to His words and receive his Peace so that we might share it with others.

Let us pray:

God of love, we praise you for Jesus and his love for us all. Enable us to hear and listen to his words as we seek to be revived and made new creatures in faith. Show us your way O God, in faith and with hope. Amen.