

April 15, 2012

5th Sunday of Easter – John Marshall - 2012

Are you alive? Are you doing more than just breathe? Are you using your eyes for seeing and not just to look at things? Are you using your ears for listening and not just hearing? Is your heart just beating or is your heart being also used for loving and appreciating life?

Not long ago, about 5 weeks ago, this is the 5th Sunday of Easter, as a matter of fact, we were taught a lesson about coming back to life and light. Did you pay attention to the Collect, today? “Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow His steps in the way that leads to eternal life”. There it is again. A reference to John 14 again, when Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.’ Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’ I am always talking about looking at Jesus’ life as the Way for us Christians. Doing that is what saves Spirits. Examining how He lived His life as the Way. What are you going through right now? Life is meant to be lived and there will be times when we do not get what we want and be brought to our knees. These are the very times when we come to who we are. What’s really in our heart. How we are when we face fear. Courage comes from the heart. Honesty comes from the heart. Faith comes from the heart. Love comes from the heart. Our second reading today, 1John 4, said, “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not love God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might LIVE THROUGH HIM. In this love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

Living in Love, living in God, does not mean that everything is going to be peaches and cream. Love is never always peaches and cream. Life is never always peaches and cream. Jesus teaches we Christians that life does have suffering and He teaches us how to deal with the bad things that go on in our lives. He teaches Christians the value of faith and how it brings us real life. When we go through bad times, we often look at it as something that buries us. We walk around as if negative experiences takes life away from us. Takes LOVE away from us. That we are hidden from the light and the Love of God. The light and love of God is LIFE and we can never hide away from Him nor can anything like our difficulties cover us from Him being present in our lives. Look at Jonah. He thought he could go into the deep hollows of the ship and hide from God. WRONG!!! David said that even he if he were in hell, God will be there and find him (Psalms 139). We can never hide from the love of God nor can anything hide us from that love. We are ALIVE from that love. The things you are going through are bringing you closer to our Lord. This is the lesson that we Christians should be learning from the life of Jesus. Jesus was tempted in the 40 days. His doubt and His temptations during that time brought His

death. When He emerged, He came back to life. He knew then what needed to be done. Yes, He was to suffer. But He showed us then how we were to live. When He washed the apostles feet at the Last Supper, He showed us how to live. In service and love to others. He showed us how we should deal with suffering. In Love. In God. We live to love. We live for God. When we finally come that realization, we are resurrected. We come back to life. This is the lesson that we should be learning in the 50 days from the season of Easter to the day that we celebrate the season of the Pentecost, three weeks from now, when we come to fully understand the coming of the Holy Spirit, when we know that God is fully living in us. All of us. Yes, for Christians, Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the LIFE. Our lessons in life is to help us come to this Truth and to fashion our lives according to it.

We are learning this in a mighty way in this church. Yes, we are a small congregation. However, we are blessed in ways that seem unimaginable. God has rained His Grace upon us in this place in which we come to congregate and pray each Sunday. We held a town hall meeting this past Thursday to inform the neighborhood that we were to host about 25 to 40 bicyclers from Wisconsin protesting NATO's inclination for aggression and war and neglecting the residuals of war and aggression and not using the proper resources to help the hungry and poor in this world. 1John 3 says, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and truth." And we are doing just that. We have an amazing Church that God has given us out of Grace. No one can deny that God rains Grace upon this place and His Grace has sustained us, oh these 169 years of our existence. We are situated to do His work. To help those who are hurting and hoping in this world. As in Matthew 25, Trinity sees the welcoming and the extending of our hospitality to the bicycling campers as part of serving Christ in the stranger, the sick, the prisoner, the hungry, and the thirsty. The fact that we can do this as a church is a blessing from God. We are giving voice to those who suffer in this world of ours. When I came in here Thursday, I was stunned by all the media we had in this place of such a small congregation. I was stunned by all the people who were there that felt for the plight of others. The plight of God's children in this world. God compels us to act. 1John 3 instructs us to welcome those that fight for the needs of others. I am proud of Trinity. I am proud that we actually act to help those that hurt and hope in this world.

This is life, ladies and gentlemen. And this is how souls come back to life. In action and in deed. Is everything perfect in our lives? No. But we Christians in this place are attempting to live and act in the Way of Jesus here. We are being fueled by the Resurrection. We are bringing life, real life into this world.

You know, I have this friend. I've talked about him before. We have been friends for over 35 years. He is a friend that uniquely connects to my soul. He knows me in spirit better than anyone, I think. Well, lately, he has been saying a one word sentence to me constantly. BE. Him saying this to me resonates with me in ways that is hard for me to describe. When he says this, I realize that my living has to do with what I consider to be valuable in life. Being is loving. Being is being authentic. Being is appreciating life and love. Being is understanding that I am way more than what I appear to be but what I am with God ever present in my life. Being is life,

just as loving is life. And in this being, loving, having compassion, giving, and being real with who I am is integral to my being whole. We often let the things that are going on in our lives make us think that we are less whole. That somehow our troubles and nuances in our lives make us less than who we really are. That they diminish our possibilities. Jesus told Peter to walk on water, and for awhile, he did, until he told himself that it was impossible for him to do that, and then he started sinking. Then Jesus said, "Ye of little faith." When we "Be" really "Be" we have God present within us. Nothing can stop us because we have the power of our Lord within us. That's the Holy Spirit in us all. We BE because He be in our lives. We exist because He exists. When we know this, we can really BE. Too often, we let the ills in this world and our troubles overwhelm us into being less than who we are. We let nuance and the ungodly details of this world overcome who we really are and take that as part of being true life. But true life comes in the loving. True life comes in the realization that you are the perfect creation of God. You may not be entirely perfect in the eyes of this world, but you are perfect in the eyes of God. And what you encounter in this world is perfectly suited to your path to becoming one again with God. Yes, pain is a part of it. Suffering is a part of it. Yet, joy is a part of it, too. And you can best believe that Love is a big huge part of it, too. After all, like I said, and in 1John 4, love is from God. And because of love, God can find you anywhere and anyplace, no matter what you are going through. So, regardless of the place where you are, and regardless of the things that are currently going on in your life, God will not only find you, you are already found, in Love. Love is life. And God is love. And yes, you are very much alive, because God is and always will be with you. Like Mark Twain said, the report of your death was an exaggeration. You are alive. And you are resurrected from any troubles you have and you think you have. And in that resurrection, you must take action. And that action in life should be in love.