

“Surprise”

Acts 3:12-19 & Luke 24:36b-48

April 26, 2009

Perhaps you heard about the Minneapolis couple that decided to go to Florida to thaw out during a particularly long and cold winter. Due to their hectic schedules, the husband left Minnesota and flew to Florida on Thursday; his wife was to fly down the following day. The husband arrived, checked into the hotel and sat down at the computer in his room to send his wife an e-mail. However, he accidentally typed the wrong email address, and without realizing his error, sent the e-mail to an erroneous address. Somewhere in Houston, a widow had just returned home from her husband’s funeral. He was a pastor who had died following a heart attack. The widow decided to check her e-mail, expecting messages from relatives and friends. After reading the first message, she screamed and fainted.

The widow’s son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen, which read:

To: My Loving Wife

Subject: I’ve Arrived The note said:

I know you are surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now and you are allowed to send e-mails to your loved ones. I’ve just arrived and have been checked in. I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then! Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was. P.S. It sure is hot down here!

It would have to be really surprising hearing from one who has died. When Jesus appeared to the disciples the text says: “ 37They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.” We take this whole ‘Easter’ thing in stride Each year making a bit of a at-do about the resurrection in church but not really giving the whole thing much of a reaction in our lives. And then each Sunday we come back to church and hear a little more about how stunned and disbelieving the disciples and the early believers were by the whole thing. For us it seems to be common fare but hardly surprising Interesting Perhaps even good news if you really think about it Worthy of an ‘oh, ya, I heard that before - but little more. We hear it and then go down to drink coffee and talk about important stuff like the weather.

As the disciples became bold in proclaiming Christ following the resurrection and ascension there were some remarkable things that happened. It is unfortunate that our first lesson this morning begins in the middle of the story. Peter and John have come into the temple and have met a man that was crippled from birth. He is begging for money as they come by and here we find one of the well known lines of scripture. Peter wants to help but has no money so he says: “Silver and gold have I none - but such as I have I give to thee - in the name of Jesus rise up and walk” {Sing the song?} Our scripture follows immediately after that event. Clearly, all of the onlookers were totally impressed to see this man born lame now leaping and jumping and praising God. They rush to Peter seeking to praise him and hear more about his power to heal But Peter dismisses the

importance of that moment. In essence what he seems to say is, 'If you think it is impressive that a man born lame can walk - imagine Jesus crucified and walking out of a tomb alive. That is the amazing power of God!' Incredible! Can you even fathom the power of a God who raises the dead?

We do, so easily, get caught up in stuff that is of lesser importance. And it is not that the things that take such prominent places in our lives are unimportant. Rather, it is that too often the things of our daily life obscure other things. It is certainly not unimportant or unimpressive to find Peter tapping into the power of God in such a way that the lame walk. It was life changing for that man [and perhaps his family]. Yet hold that event next to the power of the resurrection and you have to be moved by what God is really able to do. Can you imagine it God gives life to the dead. Can we even fathom all that might mean for us?

If you ever had an opportunity to listen to Garrison Keillor giving his monologues on A Prairie Home Companion on Public Radio you might understand his sense of humor. In his humorous way he pictured for the listeners the kind of people Midwesterners [especially those from Lake Wobegone] are. One week he said: "My people are not Paradise people. We've lived in Minnesota all of our lives and it has taken a lot out of us. My people aren't sure they'll even like paradise: not sure perfection is all its cracked up to be. My people will arrive in heaven and stand just inside the gate, shuffling around. It's a lot bigger than I thought it was going to be, they might say. We'll say, "No thank you, we can't stay for eternity, we'll just sit and have a few minutes of bliss and then we have to get back!"

Sure that is yard work to do, friends to send text messages to, naps to take and dinner to prepare. Is there a place in there to marvel at the real mystery of faith - is there room in there to worship the God who brings life to the dead.

The Jews in Jerusalem got really excited about the healing of a lame man much as we would. And appropriately so. I have wondered if we get so excited about a lame man walking because they saw the struggles of life every day all around them and when ever we see healing of the pain, there is something to rejoice about. Jesus was raised from the dead. Now that was something that did not happen every day. But in it God reveals His power and love. Do we get excited about the way God uses His power in our world?

I was interested to read a statement that had been made by St. Gregory the Great who served as Pope from 590 to 604. In reflecting on the book of Job he wrote: "If a dead man is raised to life, all men spring up in astonishment. Yet every day one that had no being is born, and no man wonders, though it is plain to all, without doubt, that it is a greater thing for that to be created which was without being than for that which had being to be restored. Because the dry rod of Aaron budded, all men were in astonishment; every day a tree is produced from the dry earth ... and no man wonders ... Five thousand men were filled with five loaves; every day the grains of seed that are sown are multiplied in a fullness of ears, and no man wonders. All wondered to see water once turned into wine. Every day the earth's moisture, being drawn into the root of the vine, is turned by the grape into wine, and no man wonders. Full of wonder then are all the things which men never think to wonder at, because they are by habit become dull to the consideration of them. "

Isn't it amazing all of the things that we can become 'dull' to the consideration of. God is active bringing life to the world everyday and we begin to take it all for granted.

We hear the good news - God raised Jesus from the dead. Let us not grow dull to that amazing good news. AMEN