

MAY 8, 2011

SCRIPTURE:

ACTS 2: 14, 36-41

1 PETER 1: 17-23

LUKE 24: 13-35

MEDITATION:

RESPONDING TO THE MESSAGE

Every week we gather here as community. We come together, a diverse group of people, to worship and to praise God. We come as individuals and yet we morph into one, a community of folks who BELIEVE and who want to respond to what we hear and do in this sacred space. We come today especially to make promises as we participate in the baptism of Colten. These promises we make are serious, they are not just empty words that we have said so many times that they no longer make any significant difference to us. Our next generations, as portrayed to us in this beautiful tiny boy child, depend on us to take VERY SERIOUSLY the promises that we have made to him and to each other. We are meant to RESPOND to all of this. If we come to put in an hour out of obligation, if we come to “make an appearance” or to be seen as “doing” something “good” and we are NOT changed at our very core, then we are cheating ourselves and our God. Let me read to you again the words of our baptismal liturgy.....

We gather now to celebrate the gift of grace that is given to us in the Sacrament of Baptism. We are one body and one spirit. We have one hope in God’s call to us. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Creator of us all.

OUT OF THE WATER OF BAPTISM WE RISE WITH NEW LIFE, FORGIVEN OF SIN AND ONE WITH CHRIST, MEMBERS OF CHRIST’S BODY.

To this we MUST RESPOND!

Today we honour our mother’s, and all women who have nurtured us in our lives. I have vivid memories of my mother, tucking my brother and me into our beds and then sitting on a chair between the two beds while she read us our bed time story. It was a nightly ritual that went on for many years. My brother and I would drift off to sleep. sometimes lost in the imagination of being with Christopher Robin and Winnie the Pooh, on some great adventure, or some small calamity involving too much honey or a lost tail on Eeyore. Those stories were important to us. For my mother it was surely a way to finally get two active children to sleep and for my brother and me it was the way of learning life lessons and life’s truth in delightful tales. The stories and the love were what shaped our young minds and hearts. One cannot deny the power of story to engage the heart and awaken the imagination.

Storytelling is what we are about each Sunday as we gather here as Christ's community. We listen to the stories of long ago – ancient stories of what happened in our Jewish history and stories of how Jesus lived his earthly life. These stories are meant to make a difference to how we live our lives today. They are meant to cause us to RESPOND in a way that will change us and help us to change the world around us.

If we put ourselves into the sandals of those two disciples as they walked that road to Emmaus we know about retelling the story of what had just happened in Jerusalem. And unknown to them Jesus fell into step beside them. His question about their discussion launches them into a story, a story ironically that they expected he had already heard (not knowing that the story they told was his own). As so at his insistence they begin again, relating the hopes and heartaches that had been played out over the past few days.

Telling the story – of our lives and of our congregation – is important work as we journey through life. Our story, and our perspective on it, is unique. It represents not only the facts or truth about what happened, but it also reveals something of our nature and our response to life's encounters. The story of our congregation is the story of our faith. It is the story of how we have, over the years, striven to be good stewards of the resources of people, gifts, energies, time, and opportunity to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. How effectively we tell our story and how we live our faith influences how people will receive it. We tell the story of God's interaction with us and our call to be in service to the world. So as Jesus joined those disciples, it is no wonder this is where he begins, by asking them to tell their story. And he falls into step with them as they begin.

As we tell our stories, either personal or communal, it is important for us to take the time to listen, to really hear what we are saying. It's important for us to ask ourselves, what is it that we are really communicating? When we tell the story of our congregation, what and who do we talk about? What places in our congregational story are missing or are told so many ways it's not clear what is actually true? What part of the story do we tell without fully understanding its meaning? The disciples told their story but failed to see what they told actually meant! We need to ask: do we understand the meaning of our own story? What of it remains a mystery? What of it rings true?

When my brother and I were little we really believed that there was a wood "somewhere" where Christopher Robin lived with a "bear of little brain" and that Eeyore really did get terribly confused at times, and that Piglet was practical and wise beyond his years. As we grew older it didn't really matter that they didn't actually live. What mattered was the love in which those stories were read to us and the lessons that were taught. Lessons about sticking together in difficult moments, and treating each other well and loving each other no matter what. Lessons about accepting each other's faults and looking past them to learn better ways of being together. Lessons about persistence and above all lessons that taught love was more important than anything else.

Colten will hear many stories as he grows. His family at home and his family in Christian community have promised to teach him stories that matter to how he lives his life and how he grows to help the world be a safe and loving place for all people. We all have a

responsibility to keep that promise and to teach him well. It is said well in a prayer by Lancelot Andrews that teaches us how we should learn and walk with a risen Christ:

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work. I give you my feet to go your way. I give you my eyes to see as you do. I give you my tongue to speak your words. I give you my mind that you may think in me. I give you my spirit that you may pray in me. Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me...I give you my whole self that you may grow in me, so that it is you, Lord Jesus, who live and work and pray in me.

May it be so.AMEN