



Message for Eastertide 3

It'll Take a Miracle

Scriptural References:

Acts 3: 12-19, 1 John 3:1-7, Luke 24:36-48, Psalm 4

Greetings Saints, and on behalf of Mona and myself and our worship team this morning, thank you for making the decision to be with us again in worship. We are blessed mightily that you have once again invited us into your homes, and it is an invitation that we treasure. I am honored to be your priest and gratefully to be able to speak to you from this pulpit. The joyfulness, spirituality and diversity that you bring to our Community of Faith is a treasure. We have some great sacred stories to speak about this morning, so let's get started with today's message entitled, "It'll Take a Miracle."

During the Eastertide Season, Saints, we have another transition, another pivot point on the story of the evolution of the Jesus Way Movement. During this time, we shift from looking and learning about what Jesus did, to what the followers of Jesus did. No scriptural work illustrates this shift better than the work we know as Luke/Acts. We often think of our modern bible, our "Canon of Scripture" as a book, since we always see it bound together as a unit. But in reality, each book in the Bible, especially what we call the New Testament is its own book, with its own context, focus, purpose and intention. Luke/Acts is a perfect example. It is one book with two volumes crafted by the same author. In the first book, Luke, we are told about what Jesus did. In the second volume, Acts, we are told stories about what the followers of Jesus did. And what the followers of Jesus did was nothing short of a miracle. So, before we start talking about miracles, let's have a look at a good working definition.

“Miracle, a highly improbable event, development or accomplishment that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws that brings a welcome outcome and is often considered to be the work of divine agency.”

- 1) Highly improbable event, development or accomplishment
- 2) Not explicable by natural laws
- 3) Welcome outcome
- 4) Work of Divine Agency

Now, what I am *not* going to talk about today is all of the “miracles,” the shock and awe that is contained in Acts of the Apostles...and there is a lot. The healings, and resurrections, exorcisms and the like, that the early Christian writers used to prove that Jesus’ followers were the “real deal.” What I do want to talk about is the miracle that Christianity survived and sustained at all during that 300 years between Jesus and the Emperor Constantine.

So, the start of it all, the work of the Jesus Way followers, occurs on the Sunday night after Jesus’ transformation and resurrection. If you were paying attention last week...Jesus stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” The whole Jesus Way journey started with forgiveness. Next, Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” We hear some of this same story in today’s gospel. Jesus is telling his followers...if this is truly going to happen...if we are going to transform the world around a simple commandment of loving...you, friends, are the ones to make it happen. On this night Jesus is giving his followers an ultimatum. If we are going to change the Jesus Way from a tiny circle of loving disciples that simply made life bearable for each other into a true Jesus Way Movement, a life changing, societal changing revolutionary movement...then you all have to get going, leave this room, “ruck up” as we said last week.

Who would have thought it. 15 illiterate, poor, societally marginalized scared-to-death individuals were able to be opened, transformed and yes, resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit. Some fishermen, a couple of women, a merchant, not a spiritual or cultural elite among them...This Beloved Nucleus of Nobodies started a ripple on that very evening that became an unstoppable tsunami some 300 years later, when over half of the then known world of Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt and the Middle East professed their belief in Christianity. Culminating in Constantine, the Emperor of Rome professing his belief in the Jesus Way in 313AD. Shortly thereafter Christianity was the “official” religion of the Roman Empire. A miracle? Perhaps, some would say.

But it is amazing and inspiring what was accomplished by these most primitive of Christians, the original followers of the Jesus Way. What belief in a simple yet profound message, “Tonight, I give you a new commandment. Love one another as I have loved you.” And having that message, that Vision fueled by the Holy Spirit, “...then He breathed on them.” “Primitive Christianity,” some call it. Before all the theology, Christology, dogma, doctrine, heresy-wrangling and theological complexity twisted and turned the message until it was almost unrecognizable. Primitive Christianity? How about pure Jesus-ness as another way to express it.

Pure Jesus-ness...Love one another. Pure Jesus-ness, love is patient, love is kind. Pure Jesus-ness love is not envious, boastful, arrogant or rude. Pure Jesus-ness...Love does not insist on its own way. Love rejoices in the truth. Pure Jesus-ness. At Jesus’ Baptism...Jesus’ own commitment to his God-Given Vision Quest, “This is my Son, my beloved...listen to Him.” Creator God investing in pure Jesus-ness. “You are made in the image and likeness of God...while you were being formed in the womb, I knew you...”- pure Jesus-ness. Stand for peace and justice and truth and respect the dignity of every human being. Pure Jesus-ness.

Some say it took a miracle to get Christianity from Jesus to Constantine. It’s gonna take another miracle to get us back. Let us be that miracle.