

Easter V Year C

“See the home of God is among mortals”

All of us have a story....there are stories about each of us that in effect capture the essence of who we are....the golden thread woven within a recurring story, that most probably has to be told about us and not by us....in other words, I don't think I could tell my story about myself with any objectivity...someone else would have to do it...none of us have so-called perfect stories, but within the warp and woof, the ebb and flow of our lives there is a story that gets at the person we really are....I'll tell you a story about my son Rhett....a recent story....last year....He has a friend who is a recovering addict...and his friend's very concerned parents came to Austin to see about him...It just so happened that we were in Austin at the same time...Rhett wanted us to invite his friend and his parents to supper...so that his friend's parents would be relieved to see that his son was surrounded by nice people...that's Rhett....and you have a story about how you love, too...there's someone who can tell it...and we'll know that it's true...a true story about who we are....I could have said our son Rhett generously loves....but it takes a story doesn't it, to know that....I could tell you my mother has an incisive wit...but better, I could tell you about the time in Sunday school class when a classmate accused her of rarely keeping her opinions to herself; to which my mother replied, “Honey you should hear the things I don't say!”

Our holy writ, the Bible, that compendium of ancient story, both Hebrew Scripture and New Testament literature are stories about who God is...who God is in relationship to a particular people...the Bible not a rule book but a story book...and let's remember all stories require interpretation and re-interpretation....the sweep of scripture: stories about who God is...God just doesn't reveal Godself...God needs us for that...to tell God's story....and therefore stories as to the essence of the human community as well... we made in God's image....We could say that God is compassionate....but wouldn't it be better to say that “a man came to Jesus and said if you want, you could heal me...and Jesus answered “I do want”...and the man was healed instantly”....so it takes the imagination to know the truth of the matter...the truth of who our God is and the truth of who we are...Jesus taught as you know by the use of stories....stories the way in to the truth.

We learn of this God of ours in the stories told about this God of ours. We know the story from the garden in the beginning...that God warned the

man and the woman not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, or they'd die. They ate, didn't die, and God clothed them and provided for them instead...God is a God of mercy....God led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt in spite of massive military intervention....against all odds...God is a liberator...God brought the captives back from Babylon, and resettled them in their homeland...God is a restorer....the people of Israel time and again worshipped other Gods, but God didn't forsake them; God forgave them...God forgives....At the pleading of Moses to spare his people in the desert after God had decided to kill them...God we are told repents of his anger and gives them another chance...God repents like us....Jesus prays to God for the man born blind to receive his sight....and immediately, according to Mark, he does....God is a healer....Jesus tells stories of God including all at table, including tax collectors and sinners...God is inclusive and just....and in the resurrection of the God/man Jesus...God in Christ is raised to new life...God is a God who recreates and renews....God always and forever bringing life out of death....

We could go on, telling stories of God...but the reality is that God's story is our story...James Joyce said that in the beginning man created God....God a human projection...and in a sense that is true....because we know that the golden thread of our story is God-like. It is the way we are made...the divine within....since the beginning we've known... when we tasted of the tree of God knowledge....we knew and know...that we are like God...and ever since we have been telling God's story....and our story ...two stories that are in truth one story, inseparable...one luminous life being lived out for the good of the whole.... In spite of that which would impede such good....God's life among mortals....God, not something other...but God in radical intimacy with us.

We are now in the great fifty days of Easter in which we hear the story of resurrection, another story about God....and surely we know that this story yet again is about us....Jesus the symbol, the enfleshed metaphor of the true human...Jesus then lens through which God sees us....as Christ is raised from the dead...we dear people of God are raised from the dead...we are raised into the life of the Spirit...we are raised to make good God's promises of life giving justice....and mercy and compassion....and healing touch...to renew and restore and liberate...we are the raised ones to invite the excluded to the dinner party in sacred hospitality...living as God lives, so they too, the lost ones of the story, the un-cast ones of the story... are surrounded by the persistent, the undaunted love of God...that even death can't quench....

My CPE instructor Will Spong once asked me, out of the blue, if I believed in the resurrection of Jesus....to this day, I'm not sure if he meant literally a dead body brought back to life....but my answer was and is...yes, indeed I believe...that resurrection is real....more than we once thought....not a singular moment in history...but a reality that life is forever about restoration and liberation and renewal and abundance....the life cycle which we may trust always, the grand truth of the universe....resurrection as real as healing touch...as real as inviting the stranger into our midst...as real as forgiveness....as real as peace of mind...as real as loving compassion...as real as every act of justice...as real as every act of peacemaking...in every act of love Christ is raised from the dead...and we as well...raised into what theologians call eternal life...not in the hereafter...but now, today...resurrection life a present reality....we are people of the resurrection not just for fifty days but forever....and that is why we come here...and that is why we go out into the world.....to bear this living water in which we are baptized to the world.

This story of God...this story of humankind...is a consummate love story....love that undoes the power of fear and death....through every act of sacrifice...this is love that enables the dead of our world to stand in the light of dignity....dignity the outward and visible sign of Christ raised among us....and what is next in this story? It is for us to raise others until all stand in the light of God's life...it is for us to be the story...until all stand with a story worth telling...when all are freed from every bond....and taught the story in seeing the story lived in the flesh...when all are endowed with the power of God to create and recreate...when all live as God lives...when all have at last come home to their true selves....Love is our work...Love the means to a marvelous end becoming as we speak....Love stronger than death...Love, the golden thread... love, the story of who we really are....and as it has always been.... that will be some story to tell.