

## **The Fourth Sunday of Easter [A]**

May 11, 2014

Haven Lutheran Church

Readings: Acts 2: 42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2: 19-25; John 10: 1-10

Grace and peace to you from God – Father, Son, Holy Spirit — Amen

There are things that don't come natural to most of us which is one reason God gave us parents. For example, gratitude is something that is not innate but learned. Hungry, wet, hurting, the utterly dependent baby cries and a loving parent provides what is needed. But somewhere along the way, when basic language skills begin to kick in, a good parent knows it's time to teach gratitude for what is given so one learns thankfulness rather than entitlement. It's at that time you Moms begin to say what you will need to say a zillion times or more. You, a waitress, grandmother, friend gives something to your child and out of the depths of your DNA these words arise: "What do you say?" To which we children learn the correct response is, "Thank you." It's more than teaching manners. It's trying to cultivate hearts that appreciate generosity or a job well done... It's an attempt to pass on a deep value of simple or great kindnesses. So you parents endure the endless eye rolls and "Moth —er!" when you say yet again, "Don't forget to say thank you....." When the day comes that your child actually begins to say, "Thank you" without the least prompting, it takes every ounce of restraint not to do your version of a touch down, Happy dance right there in front of God and the world.

Another thing most of us will need to learn is sharing. Once beyond Dada and Mama, "me" and "mine" and "no" seem to come quickly into our toddler vocabulary. At times children can be incredibly generous, but most have their limits when it comes to sharing certain toys, computer time, candy, grandma's attention. Just imagine that familiar scene of siblings having an escalating fight over a toy or a bag of M & M's. Mother says, "If you can't share it than" ---- come on you know the rest — "then nobody gets it." A parent is doing more than ending a shouting match or preventing bloodshed. Like Jesus, they are trying to cultivate hearts that know the importance of sharing what

we have and being sensitive and caring toward those who do not have. This learning to share may be even a harder value to teach or learn than gratitude. We seem endlessly stalked by our definitions of “fair share” or fears of not having enough or those ugly monsters of jealousy or greed. *What* could be shared may change as we move from children to adults but, despite our parents very best efforts, the battle inside of us about sharing our time, talents and treasure continues.

A young Donovan Drake had an ongoing religious discussion with his Mom. At least once a week he wanted to talk about “What miracle in the Bible was hardest for God to do?” Creation and the resurrection were above all the others, but Donovan wondered if getting the walls of Jericho to fall down was harder than parting the Red Sea for God? Was walking on water easier than calming a storm? Or maybe it was those plagues, one right after another, used to convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites, that stretched God’s miracle muscles the most.

Little Donovan Drake grew up to become Rev. Dr. Donovan Drake. He wrote, “Well, now, as an adult and after years of theological education and much research, I think I have the answer to my childhood question. The most difficult miracle that ever took place in scripture can be found...drum roll please...in Acts chapter 2! "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." Donovan continues, “That’s got to be it! Don’t you think God would have an easier time of making the walls tumble down or walking on water than getting any human being -- [let alone a whole community] – to sell their "possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need"? <sup>1</sup>

Wonders and signs were being done. Believers were selling all they had. They held things in common. In other words, they shared what they had with each other and with those in need. “Jesus was risen from the dead. Death couldn’t hold him down. The

Resurrection power of God was working wonders in the world that we “may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10) And to testify to the amazing things God was doing in and through them...those disciples shared. They didn't crash mountains into the sea. They didn't levitate off the ground. They didn't have halos floating over their heads. They shared”. ...Sharing was a hallmark of the first Christian community, set on fire by the resurrection. It set them apart from the prevailing culture of their day.<sup>2</sup> And it did more than make their mothers proud. This sharing changed them. AND It led others to believe in Jesus and the unfolding Kingdom of God.

Made in God's image, freed by a Risen Lord — Sharing is still a hallmark of a church community that is listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd and following him. Sharing will still set us apart from the prevailing culture of our day. Sharing is still a way God frees us *from* the thieves and bandits that would tell us the abundant life has to do with the car you drive, the names on your shoe or clothing or having the most recent technology. Sharing is still a way God free us *for* generosity and fearless compassion, that we might know the joy of God's abundant life and others may see the love and liberating power of God.

Pastor Drake may be right that the radical sharing of the first Christian community was one of God's mightiest miracles. But that miraculous power is still at work. When you see food items in the narthex for holiday baskets or VBS.... when you see the church in motion to provide a luncheon after a funeral or religious education for our children... when people call someone they notice missing from church to see how they are and others deliver Micah's backpacks to Fountaindale School.... when you see clothing being donated or hear the noisy offering to help the hungry... when we sacrifice so others can experience the love and care of God, we “are seeing the fingerprints and footsteps of the Risen Christ who is alive, right here and right now, made flesh in those who share<sup>3</sup> with joy and thanksgiving. Sharing. It's a miracle. Little did we know that

when our Mom's were teaching us to share, she and God were training us to work miracles that can transform lives... and change the world. Thank you, Mom. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Linda M Alessandri 5/11/14

#### ENDNOTES

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1. Donovan Drake, "God's Most Difficult Miracle" April 13, 2008 posted on [http://day1.org/1089-gods\\_most\\_difficult\\_miracle](http://day1.org/1089-gods_most_difficult_miracle)

2. Quote and ideas in this paragraph from Rick Morely posted 4/30/14 on <http://www.rickmorley.com/archives/3020>

3. John C. An Nuys, "Bulldozers and Casserole Dishes" posted on [goodpreacher.com](http://goodpreacher.com)