

Following the Signs

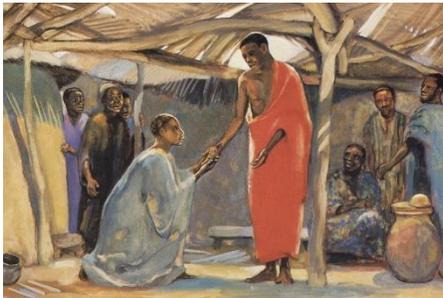
A Message shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

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by Rev. Dave Le Grand



As people of faith – a tradition that believes fervently in “signs”, landmarks if you will, that help us to figure out where we are, spiritually, and where we are going. Let us review the Biblical signs of the Easter season that we saw...”



Jesus had died, his followers were devastated, locked away in a room together. Jesus, somehow, appeared in that room twice, to let them know that death was not the end. Thomas missed the first visit, so Jesus again appeared just for Thomas, so he could touch him, know that the experience of Christ was real.”

Then...

...we heard the story told that the disciples decided that they needed to go back to what they knew best, fishing. But the night of fishing was awful. This stranger suggested to them, “How about trying the other side.”

It was a miracle. They caught so many fish immediately. Jesus' friend Peter was on that boat and he knew right then that this was Jesus! He was so excited. Jesus didn't leave it at that, he made them a meal, they ate together. We have the most meaningful chats over dinner – Jesus knew that.



Then...



...we had a story back before he died, when Jesus told his friends that they only need to listen, to find quiet, listen so that you can even hear the breeze and leaves rustle – listen and you will hear his voice.

It is kind of like a shepherd with their sheep. In a giant flock of sheep from different herds all mixed up, when the shepherd calls or whistles, that shepherd's sheep knows it is their shepherd. We

can be like those sheep, listening for the voice of our friend Jesus helping us when we don't know what to do.

Then...

...we heard a story about Jesus teaching his disciples, he told them to “love one another, as I (that was Jesus) have loved you.” That love is easy when it is people who love you and are kind to you. Much harder, Jesus said, when they don't like you. Jesus even loved and forgave the people who hurt him very much.



Feeling that love of others, sharing that love, that is how we remember that this is a beautiful world, even when other people might say that this world is mean... or terrible... or that there is only hate. Even in awful moments, there are always people to reach out to those who are sad, there are far more people who care than those who are mean. By being thankful for people loving us and loving those people, we make this world kinder.



Then...

...we had Jesus talk about Peace, a very special peace. Not just a one time peace, like a toy you buy at a store that eventually breaks. This peace, if we learn to recognize it, it makes us healthy, it makes us thankful every day even when things are not going well. People will ask us, "How can you be so happy?" It is knowing that you and me, we are never alone. God is with us, and we just want to do kind things to make our world better.

Finally...

...when Jesus knows that he will have to leave, he prays, God – his word for God was much like Momma or Papa, like his parent – he said, "God, may all of my friends be one as you and I are one."



Isn't this a wonderful symbol of connection by Jen Bruneau? We must be part of community, connected, caring for one another. It's not easy to be a community, though. We have troubles, conflicts and even fight sometimes. But to be a Jesus community we always love – all our decisions must be based on love and peace, not greedy decisions or decisions we make out of fear. We are together, like those cute rocks.

So here we are. We have these signs.



Being human beings, we look for signs all the time. When I was a child, I heard the story of Chicken Little, or Henny Penny. Everything that happened made her think that the sky was falling. She was paranoid and got her friends thinking the sky was falling too.



There are definitely signs that warn us of things, we need to listen. Climate Change – some say, aww. don't worry about that. We know that our earth and atmosphere needs healing.

I have heard people saying, looking at the conflicts in our world, that the world is going to come to an end. "The End is Near." But listening for the voice of Jesus, we might see the other sign.

We are always in seasons in church and life. We are at the end of Easter this coming week and something exciting is coming next week! What is in that box????

If we follow Jesus and his Way, we will know that there are endings, but endings are also beginnings of new seasons, new situations, and new challenges too.

We, like those disciples, are called not to buy into “the sky is falling” messages of our world, but instead, believing that God is making something altogether new in this world, and in us. New means different, and strange, and uncomfortable.

What lays ahead is the coming of God’s kin-dom on earth as it is in heaven. We need to keep our eyes focused on the signs of that kin-dom all around us, and be witnesses, to share the good news of those signs especially with people who feel afraid, alone, angry or lost. We are Almost There, folks, hang in there.

Graphics:

1. “The End is Near” image from timeanddate.com
2. “Almost There” image from sunstonebookkeeping.com
3. “Touch Jesus” painting by Jésus Mafa
4. “Nourish Galilee” Maesta Altarpiece in Cathedral of Siena 1308-1311 by Duccio di Buoninsegna
5. Image from madebyjoel.com
6. Heart collage created by Jen Bruneau
7. “The Light of the World” painting by William Holman Hunt 1851-1856. Image from wikipedia.org
8. “Connections” stones created by Jen Bruneau