

St. Andrew's Church - April 18, 2010

Sermon "Feed my sheep - and follow me" - The Rev. Doug Kendall

Lord God,

Still in us any voice but your own.

Help us to hear your word read, spoken, and sung.

In Jesus name, AMEN.

I have always loved the images that come out in our passage this morning.

This beach scene is filled with symbols and multiple layers of meaning.

When this passage begins, the disciples have seen the risen Jesus already twice,

but still they seem unsure what to do next with their lives,

so they have gone back their familiar ways.

They have gone back to familiar ground.

They are back in Galilee

The sea of Tiberius is also the sea of Galilee.

And so the disciples spend the night fishing, and they catch nothing.

And then a stranger on the beach, is giving them, the fishermen, advice on fishing.

"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some fish."

I imagine two things would be going through their minds.

First of all most likely they would have been fishing

from both sides of the boat all night,

so there is nothing special about the other side of the boat.

and second of all they would be wondering

why this stranger thought he could give them advice of fishing.

But we are told, they cast the net anyway,

and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

There is something very unusual going on here,

something extra-ordinary, and the first person to get what it is,

to understand what is happening, is the beloved disciple.

The one who last week went into the empty tomb, and saw, and believed.

Is the first one to see that it is Jesus on the shore, and to believe.

That same beloved disciple is the one who now leans over to Peter and says,

"It is the Lord."

And as always Peter is the impatient man of action,

He has to jump out of the boat and go right over to Jesus.

leaving the others to haul in this huge catch of fish.

When they get to shore Jesus has a charcoal fire burning,

With fish cooking and fresh bread as well.

But before they sit down to share the meal,

Jesus tells them to do one more thing,

"Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

Soon Jesus calls them back to the fire to have breakfast.

Jesus is the host at this meal.

Like at the feeding of the five thousand,

Jesus is the one who takes the bread and gives it to them,

And takes the fish and does the same.

In some ancient manuscripts of the Gospel of John,

The parallel is made even clearer with the words,

"Jesus took the bread, and blessed it, and gave it to them."

Remember too that in the Gospel of John, there is no Eucharist.

The last supper in John does not include

the breaking of bread and sharing of wine,

instead it includes Jesus washing the disciples feet,

showing them in a very real way what service to others is all about.

So now we have Jesus on the beach breaking bread with and for the disciples.

And after they have all eaten, Jesus takes Peter aside to speak with him.

In this complicated interaction between Peter and Jesus,
there is a lot going on here.
This is where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him,
And Peter responds each time that he does,
But becomes more upset each time.

**When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”
He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”**

Many people have noted that in this way Jesus was giving Peter the opportunity
to redeem himself for the three times that he denied Jesus
in the courtyard of Caiaphas’s house.

That is true, but there is much more going on here.
Something that does not come through in our English translation,
But is present in the original Greek,
Is the fact that Jesus also uses two different words for Love,
When he asks Peter if he loves him.
In one instance it is Agape, and another Philia.

Although there does not seem to be any great significance
to any of this subtle change in words,
one thing it does do is to broaden the implication
of what is involved in caring for Jesus followers.
And it links ever so closely the idea of loving Jesus,
being expressed in our care for God’s children.

**A second time Jesus said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”
He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.”**

But again what does it mean to Tend Jesus Sheep,
And to express our love for Jesus.
We cannot help but be drawn back into the Gospel
as we hear these words of Jesus.
Jesus is constantly talking about love in this Gospel,
And what that love means.

It was right after Jesus has washed the disciple’s feet
that he gives them a new commandment.
After Jesus washed their feet he said to them,
**I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.
Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”**

Just as Jesus has loved us, so we should love one another.
Not to earn Jesus love, or to earn our way into heaven,
But simply because Jesus loved us first,
So we should love one another.

That is Jesus new commandment to his followers,
And Jesus then goes on to say,
**“They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me;
and those who love me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”**

**Jesus said to him the third time,
“Simon son of John, do you love me?”
Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?”
And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”
Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.**

In what ways can we feed Jesus Sheep and tend his lambs though?

Gathering for worship here every Sunday morning,
and singing God's praises,
and offering Sunday School for our children
is one way we feed Jesus lambs.

Visiting those who are lonely and those who are in Hospital,
and bringing worship to those who live at Granite Ridge and the Villa
we feed Jesus lambs.

are all

Being involved in the Stittsville food bank,
and supporting Presbyterians Sharing
and Presbyterian World Service and development
when there are earthquakes and tsunamis and other crises around the world,
are other ways of helping, and the list can go on and on.

And yet there is always a feeling that there is more we could and should do.

What about the need for a genuine experience of community,
in a world that seems to worship individuality?

A community that cares and is ready to help,
but also a community that provides opportunities
for people to fulfill their desire to help others,
and to respond to their own calling to tend Jesus sheep?

This is one thing we really understand here at St. Andrew's

Being a community,
caring for each other in times of need,
offering and accepting our diverse gifts in worship and in ministry.

What about some creative ways to reach out to a generation of people as well,
People who do not relate to our traditional ways of singing God's praises
Or traditional understandings of God and Jesus,
but who are longing for something deeply meaningful in their lives,
who are longing for a connection to God,
and who live right here in our community?

God worked through the generation who came before us here at St. Andrew's

And has given us the gift of the location of our ministry
here on Main St. Stittsville,
and a building that is both beautiful, and warm and welcoming.

Our challenge in our generation is,
along with making our building accessible to all,
it to make our ministry accessible.

To also see the potential that exists around us,
and to creatively use the gifts we have been given
to feed Jesus lambs and to tend his sheep.

Until recently I have never really noticed
that there was something very important that happened
before Jesus asked Peter to feed his sheep.

He provided for the disciples an abundant catch of fish,
And in so doing provided for them two important symbols.

First of all our God is a God of abundance, not of limited resources.

Jesus first miracle in the Gospel of John
was to turn an extravagant amount of water
into an overabundance of excellent wine.

Jesus last miracle in the Gospel of John
was to provide the miracle of an abundance of fish,
when all evidence showed that there were none,
and when the disciples believed there were none.

But the fish did not just appear.

It was by following Jesus words
to lower their nets over the other side of the boat,

that they discovered the abundance that existed all around them.
It was by following Jesus teaching
that they discovered the abundance that existed all around them.

The other important symbol here is that before Jesus asked Peter
to feed his sheep, Jesus fed Peter and his disciples.
Jesus provided for them first, before he asked them to do the same in his name.
This is the heart of stewardship.
It is from the resources that God has already given to us,
that we are called to share with others, and reach out with God's good news.

God has worked through the generation who came before us
here at St. Andrew's Church
and has given us an incredible gift.
Our challenge in our generation is to see the potential that exists,
and boldness and vision to creatively use the gifts we have been given
to be good stewards all we have
to feed Jesus lambs and to tend his sheep I this generation.

Jesus said to his disciple, "...do you love me?"
And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."
Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

And then Jesus last words in the Gospel of John were, "Follow me".
And now to God the creator of all things who provides for us,
And to Jesus Christ who teaches us,
And to the Holy Spirit who gives to us creativity and inspiration,
Be all honour and power and glory this day and forever more. AMEN.