

In the name of the Risen Lord, Amen.

A young Episcopal priest called all of the children in the congregation to come forward for the children's sermon on Easter morning. He started by asking, "What's warm and furry and hops around on the ground?" There was silence. A little perturbed, he tried again. "What's warm and furry, hops around on the ground and has long, floppy ears?" Again, nothing. Somewhat exasperated, the priest asked, "What's warm and furry and hops around on the ground and has long, floppy ears and loves carrots?" One of the boys nudged his friend and said, "I know the answer is supposed to be Jesus, but it sure sounds like a rabbit to me."

We could begin today's sermon with a similar line of questioning. What do all of the readings today have in common? Just like the little boy, we all KNOW that the answer is always supposed to be Jesus. But let's see if maybe there is also something additional we should look at.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter cured a lame man and everyone had watched the man walk away. They were astonished at what had happened, and Peter said, "why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk." And then he went on to preach to the gathered crowd about the power and wonder of the risen Lord.

In the Gospel, Luke tells us about Jesus appearing to the Disciples, shortly after the resurrection. They were in the midst of despair over His death, and suddenly there He was. The first thing He said to them was, “Peace be with you.” And then, he began to convince them that He was real, was risen, and was truly there amongst them. And He said, “repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in (Jesus’) name to all nations, .... (Because) You are witnesses of these things.” In other words, you know who I am, you have experienced the power of God in your own lives, now you must go out and show others what you know.

And what DID they know? They knew what the author of 1<sup>st</sup> John said in this morning’s reading. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. ... Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.”

And what WOULD God reveal to them about who God was – and is? The Psalmist tells us, “(P)ut your trust in the LORD. Many are saying, ‘Oh, that we might see better times!’ Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O LORD. You have put gladness in my heart, more than when grain and wine and oil increase. I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep; for only you, LORD, make me dwell in safety.”

I KNOW the answer is supposed to be Jesus, but this sure looks like love to me. In the Collect of the Day this morning, we prayed, “Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold Him in all His redeeming work.” That redeeming work is love.

I read an article this week by the Rev. Dr. King Oehmig, an Episcopal priest and scholar, who discussed the book, Life of Pi. In the interest of full disclosure, I have not read the book – yet. King’s discussion of it made me check it out further and I read an on-line, sort of “*Cliff Notes*” version. Believe me, I’ll be reading the book soon. But I digress. Pi is young boy who moves with his family from India to Canada. They cross the ocean on a cargo ship which is also carrying the animals from the zoo Pi’s father operated in India, but which he has had to close. During the ocean crossing, the ship sinks and Pi ends up in a lifeboat with a zebra, an orangutan, a hyena and a tiger. Needless to say, the story gets interesting. Added to all of the drama of the animals in the boat with Pi is the fact that Pi is a very religious Hindu who is also a follower of Islam and Christianity. Pi loves God and spends a great deal of time thinking back on what he has learned about God. King said this about Pi’s Christian awakening:

Pi (has trouble understanding) ‘Christ crucified.’ Father Martin, a Catholic priest who befriends Pi, listens to the young man’s questions.

Pi says to Fr. Martin, ‘What? Humanity sins, but it is God’s Son who pays the price? I tried to imagine my own father saying to me, ‘Pi, a lion slipped into the llama pen today and killed two llamas. Yesterday another one killed a black buck. Last week two of them ate the camel. The week before it was painted storks and grey herons. And who’s to say for sure who snacked on our golden agouti?’ The situation has become intolerable. Something must be done. I have decided that the only way the lions can atone for their sins is if I feed you to them.’

‘Yes, Father, (Pi says) that would be the right and logical thing to do. Give me a moment to wash up.’ Hallelujah, my son. Hallelujah, Father.’ What a downright weird story. What a peculiar psychology!’

Pi goes on, ‘Why would God wish that upon himself? Why not leave death to the mortals. Why make dirty what was beautiful, spoil what is perfect? Love. That was Father Martin’s answer.

Love. The author of John’s first epistle uses that word 38 times in only 5 chapters.

This love that John talks about, the love that was so confusing to Pi when Fr. Martin tried to explain it, is a love that is even hard *us* to understand – and we’ve known Jesus all our lives.

Jesus came into the upper room, where the disciples were hiding from the authorities after the crucifixion. Judas wasn’t there – after he betrayed Jesus, he left and hanged himself. Peter was there, hiding, after he had denied that he knew Jesus three times. Thomas was there, even though he had a hard time believing that Jesus was resurrected. They were all there. All of the people who said that they loved Him during His earthly ministry were there ... and none of them had lifted a hand to help Him in His time of need. But Jesus was there too. The *Love* was there.

Jesus came into the room and said, “Peace be with you.” To a room full of people who had let Him down, He said, “Peace be with you.” And then He sat down and had a meal with them. He opened their minds and their hearts to the truth of who He is and what that means.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. Beloved, we are children of God – the God who loved us enough to sacrifice His only Son on our behalf. We are all children of the one who loves us and

wants nothing more than that we reflect that love to each other. He wants to open our minds and hearts to His love. And He wants us to love each other, just as He has loved us. He wants us to love each other unconditionally, to be for each other what Jesus was to them – the epitome of love. Jesus told the Disciples – and us – to love each other, no matter what. John tells us that we don't know what we will be like in the end. But we DO know what we are supposed to be like now. We are supposed to be like HIM – loving of those who hurt us – loving the prodigal sons of the world – loving the unloveable. That's what He tells us we are supposed to be like – the presence of love in the world.

Yep. Definitely sounds like love to me – the love that can only come through the grace of God. Love. Feel it. Embrace it. Reflect it out to those you know.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.

Amen.