

## Sermon for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter Year B Jan E.V.W. Hanson, Licensed Lay Preacher

"Have you anything here to eat?"

Some bread?

Some wine?

Some fish?

At the meal we call "the Last Supper," Jesus said he would not eat again with his disciples until the coming of the reign of God. Now he is eating with them; has God's reign arrived?

*Many are saying "Oh, that we might see better times"*

The words from today's psalm sound like commentary from our morning paper. Is it just human nature to wallow in our misery? Dave and I attended the Pathways 20/20 Community Report Card the other night, and a speaker who said "too many people in our county look at the empty half of the glass" got a big round of applause. There was plenty of information in the report that felt empty; an "F" on smoking while pregnant, an "F" on elder fatal falls, and "F" on alcohol and drug related deaths. Despair will not change those statistics, but hope, translated into action, will.

Apparently, some of the folks who were standing around talking about Easter in today's Gospel were from Toutle, or Scappoose, or Cougar, or somewhere in between those towns. Even in the big cities, even in Jerusalem, it can knock you sideways to meet the Risen Christ. Once again, we are finding the disciples cowering in fear, "startled and terrified". And once again, Jesus greets them in Peace, comforts them, names their fear, shows them his hands and feet, and, anticipating their unbelief, chews and swallows sardines (or whatever) before their doubting eyes.

This is amazing stuff, but it is not the only Easter miracle in this reading. The Good News that Luke is telling us, is so much more than that Christ will comfort our fears, more than the mystery of "God With Us" – Emmanuel – the Divine Incarnate, enfleshed and wounded, certainly more than Holy Fish & Chips. Luke has shown us, every way he could, that the baby that slept in the barn, grew up reaching out to those considered social outcasts, "the least," until he stretched out his arms "on the hard wood of the cross to embrace" all humanity. The really miraculous message that opens our eyes this morning to the Gospel is this; that Christ was **so** present to those disciples, (those learners or followers), that in the aftermath of the crucifixion, they found the calling, the sending out, the chutzpah to become true apostles, (messengers) or *marturos*, (witnesses) to a reality beyond mortal comprehension. This was not a passive witness, like a bystander to an accident, this was love made manifest, love that lives beyond the grave, the martyrdom of love in action. This is the miracle that transformed the Simon who denied Jesus to becoming Peter, the rock who preached in our first reading. That this Good News spread to all nations, even to *us*, even *today* is a real Easter Resurrection. The Author of our Salvation "wrote the book" but WE are the publishers!!

I think that if I could overcome my fears, seeing my beloved teacher come back to life, passing the tartar sauce into a hand with a three day old hole in it, I might be thinking, as my mind was opened to the scriptures, WOW, so that's what he kept trying to tell us!! This is SO AMAZING!! Look at his feet and hands!! I better start walking! I better set the table! I better be ready to feed the next person I don't recognize, whoever it is! I better be ready let the next person who's afraid or stuck in unbelief to

look at my wounds! I better get ready to see the light of God's  
countenance everywhere!

Sometimes it was gathering around a table.

Sometimes it was in the breaking of bread.

Sometimes it was sharing a cup.

Sometimes it was in scripture.

Sometimes it was hearing the words of God's peace.

Sometimes it was touching Christ's wounds.

Sometimes eating broiled fish can be a reminder to go fishing for people.