

“Show Me the Good News!”
Rev. Joyce Kirk-Moore

Luke 24:1-12

Easter Sunday, April 8, 2007

San Dimas Community Church, United Church of Christ

By now some of you movie buffs have caught on that this sermon title is a “take off” from a line made famous in the movie “Jerry MaGuire.” Cuba Gooding, Jr. repeats the mantra yelling “show me the money” into the telephone because his agent, played by Tom Cruise, can’t get him a million dollar football contract. He’s tired of the agent’s excuses; and he builds to a crescendo of “show me the money; show me the money.”

You may be thinking that I’m going for a big money offering later in the service, but I’m not. I don’t know about you, but today, in the year 2007, I want someone to “show me the good news!” Today, when we are faced with climate changes that will impact the entire globe and make whole islands where people now live disappear unless we drastically change, I want someone to “show me the good news.”

Today, when it’s over a year from the next presidential election and already millions of dollars have been raised to run those political campaigns (and I’ve been one of the contributors) rather than spending those millions on education for our children, I want someone to “show me the good news.”

When we are in the fifth year of war and thousands of people from many countries have died and many thousands more have been wounded, I want someone to “show me the good news.”

When over 46 million people do not have health insurance, and it’s not the poor folks “out there,” it’s people within this very faith community; and yet, we are the wealthiest nation on earth, I want someone to “show me the good news.”

When we disappoint others who we care deeply about and when we are disappointed by our relationships, I want someone to “show me the good news.” When unexpected, undeserved, overwhelming tragedy touches us or those near and dear to us, I want someone to “show me the good news.”

Well, folks, please don’t get depressed, because this sermon is about good news! We are here today because in this Holy One, Jesus, we are shown some very “good news.” In Jesus, the man of Nazareth, we see into the heart of God, and in God’s heart is a great love for God’s creation. Jesus tells us the “good news” that God cares deeply about the creation God declared “good.” God cares about the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air, and so when we rise to the challenges of global warming, we join forces with a God who can recreate this earth, this climate, so that life may thrive. And God’s creative responsive love is within us and our intellect to get with it and address this problem. And this is “good news”!

In Jesus, who comes sharing the common lot of humankind, we see the good news that God loves even those determined to be “the very least of these” and no matter where we are on the social ladder, how much or how little we have to “give back,” we are always held tenderly in the heart of God, and this is very good news.

We read in the Bible that Jesus talked with and even healed foreigners who didn’t share his Jewish faith, and he didn’t demand that they become good Christians. In my way of thinking, this is “good news” because it shows us there is hope that Gentile and Jew, Christian and Muslim might some day live together in peace.

We read in the Bible that Jesus was a healer; he cared about the wellbeing of people living on this earth; he didn’t say “don’t worry about not having health insurance because the sooner you die, the sooner you go to heaven.” He took them by the hand and healed them; he raised them to new life. So the good news is that when we take action for the health, the wholeness, the healing of others, we are doing what Jesus did.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem like we talked about last week riding humbly on a donkey with a procession of peasants from the East, knowing that he would meet up with the force of Pilate and the Roman empire from the West, the good news is he didn't turn around and go home; Jesus showed us the good news that God's kingdom is the only one that matters. This means we don't have to cave in to the systems of power that surround us, suppress us, and overwhelm us. Jesus showed us a different power, the power of God, a power that even the biggest military machine of his day, could not overcome, and for centuries since, people have seen this good news and taken courage; like Martin Luther King, Jr, who said, "truth cannot forever be pressed to the ground." This is good news!

And when Jesus went into the temple where the wealthy priest were in cahoots with the Roman's so they could keep their jobs, their wealth, and their position, he said the only religion that counts, the only church that matters, is the one that speaks the justice of God to a suffering world. Like the prophets of old Jesus knew that God's compassion longs for a world that is just for all people, and the prophets spoke of a world that fostered well being and eliminated the structured systems that would prevent peace and wellness. God's great love and compassion is actually justice in action. This is good news!

And when Peter, a disciple near to Jesus' heart, said three times that he didn't even know him, because he was too afraid to stand with Jesus, even his betrayal of Jesus wasn't the end of the story. Later Peter ran to the tomb, with all the guilt of his betrayal of Jesus, and there he was transformed by knowing Jesus alive! So this means that even in our closest relationships, when we are let down or when we let down those we love, there's always the possibility of reconciliation. This is good news!

And when the followers of Jesus experienced his presence, his aliveness, his power even after watching him die, they knew the good news that God did not abandon the One God called, "my beloved." So even in the midst of tragedy and despair, the power of God helps to carry the heavy crosses we bear .

So when we live the message, the teachings of Jesus we are witnesses to his aliveness in our world today. To live with resurrected power means that we are centered in God, we trust the creative responsive love of the universe even when all around we see death and despair. We live with courage because the power of the risen Christ says, "Fear not!" So we do not shrink back in the face of all we fear, both our personal demons and the demons of society.

Today we come because we need to hear again and remember and be shown the "good news" that life need not be lived fearing death. All the little deaths we experience day in and day out, have possibilities of being transformed into new life if we have the courage to walk away from the empty tomb. We have been shown the good news that the breadth of God's love is not limited; God's heart is big enough to hold all peoples and all creation.

We have been shown the good news that the power of the One, we know as Jesus, is a radically different power, a radically new way of living, a flame that cannot be extinguished. We have been shown the good news that we are loved with a great love, a love that knows no beginning and no end. To this love we give our hearts, our whole selves, and because of this love we leave despair at the tomb and move forward in hope, with courage, and in joy! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Thanks be to God!