

Witnesses to the Resurrection ~ Midweek Reflection # 43 Easter, 2009

“I have seen the Lord!” ~ Mary Magdalene, John 20:18

While working on my Easter Sunday sermon a phrase from a childhood song came to mind: “He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.” I was preparing to speak from John 20:1-18 and reading about that familiar interaction in the garden between the Risen Christ and Mary Magdalene where Jesus asks Mary not to hold on to him because he had not yet returned to the Father. I gained a fresh understanding of this passage from the commentary I was studying:

“Mary Magdalene cannot resume the old relationship with her Lord. This is Jesus to be sure. the risen Christ is none other than the crucified Jesus, but the ministry of the historical Jesus is over. Now begins the ministry of the glorified Christ, who relates to his followers by giving the Spirit who will abide with them forever (John 14:16). Therefore Jesus says to Mary, ‘Do not hold onto me’ (vs. 17). She and the disciples and the church are not to long for the way it was or wish to return to some past relationship with Jesus Christ. Rather they, and we, are to believe his word; it is best for you that I go away; if I do not go away, the Advocate [Spirit] will not come to you (John 16:7) the Spirit will not leave as I am leaving but will live with you forever (John 14:16); because I go away to the Father, greater works than I have done you will do (John 14:12)

(Preaching Through the Christian Year , Fred Craddock, John Hayes, Earl Holladay & Gene Tucker, Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, PA, 1993

We had a powerful experience of this indwelling Spirit of Christ in a warm time of sharing and prayer with our small group from church last night. Folks struggling with various needs were relating how God had been very present with them through the supportive caring of others in the group over the past weeks. Christ lives within the lives of his followers. We are the hands and feet and face of the Risen Christ as we reach out to the needs of others in this broken world! The bonds that have been formed over a number of years between the members of this group are clearly bonds of love created by Christ’s promised indwelling Spirit. The caring for one another has been empowered by the risen Christ’s presence in lives open to scripture and prayer and the transforming love of our compassionate God. As Peter declares, “We are witnesses (Acts 10:39),

witnesses of everything Christ can do to transform existence into abundant life!

He Lives! by Alfred H. Ackley

“I serve a risen Savior, He’s in the world today; I know that He is living, whatever men may say; I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer, And just the time I need Him He’s always near. He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me a-long life’s narrow way, He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.”

Like Mary, Peter & John we are to be witnesses to the resurrection. By living in His power and love, and touching the needs of others, we also will say to the world, “I have seen the Lord!” May this Easter season be blessed with the sure and certain presence of the Risen Christ in each of your lives. Christ is Risen, He is truly Risen!

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie