

“IT IS THE LORD!”

John 21:1-14

We will speak the words of the creed saying that we believe in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We will pray the prayer Jesus taught us as we say, “Our Father, who art in heaven. . .” We have confessed the sins we have done which are made known to us by the Ten Commandments. We began our worship with the words spoken over us in Baptism, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And we will share in the special meal that Jesus gives us in Holy Communion. But is God truly real in our lives?

He was for the disciples. It is after Jesus’ resurrection on Easter. The disciples are now in their home area of Galilee away from Jerusalem where He died. Since many of them were by trade fishermen, they decide to fish. That is something best done in the Sea of Galilee at night. But they catch nothing. As they are about to come to the shore, someone calls from the land and tells them to let out their nets. They do, and the nets are filled. This is major *deva vu* for them. John recognizes that this is Jesus and says, “It is the Lord!” He had told them to let down their nets three years ago. They get to the shore, and Jesus has breakfast waiting for them. Jesus is not some force out there. He is real to them, as real as the food we had for breakfast.

Think of our everyday lives. Even if it is cold or hot outside, we have heat and air conditioning to not have the weather make it really hard to sleep at night. We wash using water that comes from faucets, not have to pump water from a well or go to a stream or river. We eat food out of the refrigerator that comes from the store, not that we raised on the farm. And our moments can be so filled with many things—what’s on the cell phone, video games, something on the internet. We can hop in the car and do something like shop. There are so many ways to fill our time. We don’t have to just sit and think. In such a life it can be hard to feel the impact of God.

People from our Iowa District West traveled to Haiti in January to work on a home for old people there. These people have nothing to do but sit and survive. They live in shacks which are just a roof over their heads. They receive just enough food

and dirty water to stay alive. Yet, these are people of great faith. They spend hours praying and singing hymns. When some of them were taken to the home where they could get healthy meals, clean water, and real beds to sleep on, they prayed not for themselves, but for the people who were taking care of them. They don’t have all the distractions we have. They have God, real and in front of them every day of their lives.

Our modern lives have placed all kinds of “layers” between us and God. People living in primitive conditions, were always thinking about gods. They were so directly affected by things like weather which they could not control. Our Iowa soil grows tremendous amounts of corn, but only a handful of people actually grow it. They also use strains of corn that can sustain attacks by bugs and draught and late frost. Pesticides and herbicides also protect from bugs and weeds. The corn is harvested in big quantities then shipped to an elevator. It then is sent by train or barge to places where it is ground, processed, and bagged. The bags go to farmers who use it as feed for animals. The animals are slaughtered and butchered. The meat is shipped to a grocer. Then we buy it at the store and cook it. You have all those steps, all the layers between us eating the food and God sending the sun and rain and making the corn grow. And if something goes wrong—drought, hail, blight—there is so much corn grown other places that all we may notice is a little higher price to pay. So what does it really matter in our daily lives if we think of God or not?

It may not seem to make any difference to us, but it really does. We are here. That is only because of God. Our earth is placed just right in relationship to the sun that we can live. Move it in a little farther, and we’d burn up. Move it a little farther away, and we’d freeze. We have iron inside our planet that spins around with the globe and produces a magnetic field. Without that, particles from the sun would kill us. Our atmosphere not only gives us the oxygen to breath; it protects us from the sun’s radiation, which would kill us. The atmosphere is mainly nitrogen. If it were mostly oxygen, which we need, then we’d have fires all

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over the place. Even our moon is necessary as it keeps our planet from tilting to much as we spin. But we can go even farther. Science tells us there is something called the “cosmological constant.” Without that we would either collapse all together by the force of gravity or scatter all apart. It is so fine-tuned that to measure it takes a decimal place then 122 zeros before you get to a number. That is so very small. Change it in either direction and we would cease to exist. But it is right there at the perfect place. Why? Because God made it so. Whether we recognize Him or not, God is here; and He made us.

But even more God saved us. In Jesus, God came into our world in the way that could make the most impact on us—as another human being. We might think that God doing something miraculous in our lives might be better. He could pay off our loans, make us popular among our friends, or cure us from a nagging pain, but as much impact as those things would have, they would only make us want more. The impact God wants to make in our lives is love. He isn’t enough for us to just know God exists or that He is important. He wants to be able to love Him as He loves us and the only thing that we humans really know how to love in a real way is another human.

That may sound all great and fine, but we don’t have Jesus come as He did that morning to the disciples and make them breakfast so they could say, “It is the Lord!” He ascended into heaven almost 2,000 years ago.

He comes to us in people, in the people He puts in our everyday lives. Jesus said, “Whatever you do to one of the least of these, you do it unto Me.” But do we see it that way?

That’s why Jesus comes to us in His people, His followers, the Church. Church is not Sunday morning at a building where you sing old songs and please your parents and grandparents by coming. It is people, people who share Jesus with you. No, you don’t have to go to a worship service like this to be with God’s people, but it won’t happen by just living your life like most other people. You need to take time to be with God’s people which means joining with other people to pray and study God’s Word and to receive the special blessings He wants to give you in hearing, “Your sins are forgiven,” and in Holy Communion. You need to be where He comes to us today in Christian people. Then, like John, we can say, “It is the Lord!”