

SERMON

STARTERS

Ted Frost

April 3, 2005

2nd Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16

1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

Every sermon should remind us of God Almighty, the giver of life. It should point us to Christ our savior and redeemer, and it should call on each of us to respond to the “good news” from our creator and savior.

Protecting your children is the primary responsibility of a parent. Children look to us to be protected, nurtured, and safe. Recently on a trip to Disney World, my nine-year-old son was apprehensive about riding one of the attractions. He would ride only if he could sit next to his dad. I was ready to protect and he was assured I would do it.

David, the psalmist, calls upon God to keep him safe. The psalmist sees in God all that he needs. The blessings of life are from God.

Today our American culture assures us that we are entitled to everything that would protect us against sickness, misfortune, and poverty. Yet, people die from illness, there is random violence, people lose jobs, families become broken, and children go hungry.

As the Church, we are called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those in prison. We are also called to assure the world of a God who loves so much, God came to earth to bring us hope and peace. David felt the peace of God. Are we sharing the peace of God?

April 10, 2005

3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4
12-19; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

I remember as a child playing, we always had “overs.” “Overs” is what we called if we messed up. If you didn’t hit the ball right, you had “overs.” If you got caught when playing tag, you could call “overs.” It was always good to know if you messed up you could start over again.

Today there are times when I wish I could still call “overs.” Such as: 1) when my hurtful words come out before I think about what I am saying; 2) when I miss the opportunity to say loving words to a loved one; or 3) when I simply become so self-centered that I make a complete mess of things.

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23, *NIV*). We have “overs.” Even better than “overs,” we become new through the blood of Jesus Christ. We are “redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to us from our forefathers.”

Our Luke reading reminds us that Christ had to suffer to enter His glory and give us new life.

Is this not the Good News? Life does not have to be the way it is. Life does not have to be the way it has been. Life can be new. Through the grace of God, we can have “overs.”

April 17, 2005

4th Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23
1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Sometimes in the Church we unintentionally bring negative connotations to some wonderful scriptures

and hymns. Some are associated with funerals. I wish I had a dime for every time I have heard the great hymn “How Great Thou Art” sung mournfully at someone’s funeral.

We have done the same with the 23rd Psalm. Because of our apprehension to deal with physical death, we use this scripture to try to reassure ourselves about physical death. The truth is, as Les Brown once said, “we are not coming out of this alive.”

And the 23rd Psalm is not about death, but about life. We have been given life and given it abundantly. The 23rd Psalm is a call to life and not death. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters” (*Psalm 23:1, NIV*).

If this does not seem to be true, perhaps it is because we do not look for our shepherd daily. We do not stop to enjoy the “green pastures.” We do not walk beside the “quiet waters.”

Look at the words of “How Great Thou Art.” They celebrate life and how great God is to have given us life. The 23rd Psalm tells us, “Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.”

April 24, 2005

5th Sunday of Easter

Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

In many parts of the world, people of royal birth are held in high regard. Even in our lives we like the occasional day of glory. It was our family tradition (a family of seven) that the

birthday person always chose what kind of things would be done on their day. Such as: 1) what the birthday meal would be and 2) what kind of dessert would be served. It was always a high day for the birthday person.

As Americans, we celebrate and remember the lives of those who have had great impact on our culture (President's birthdays, Martin Luther King's birthday, etc.). We lift them up in high regard for all they did for our nation.

One of the reasons I like the reading of 1 Peter 2:2-10 is because it reminds us of our royal heritage. As God's children, we are a royal priesthood. Being royalty brings privileges. We are fed a special diet afforded to people of such a place. We have a great foundation upon which we stand that cannot be destroyed.

"Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10a, NIV). We are different than others. We enjoy the luxury of knowing we have received the most precious gift of all—God's mercy.

May 1, 2005

6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 17: 22-31; Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

Have you ever heard the phrase, "He needs a keeper?" Once or twice (I am sure many more times) someone has surely said this about me. A friend of mine once attended a funeral in another town and discovered after the funeral was over that he was at the First Baptist Church not the First United Methodist Church. My friend was known for needing a "keeper."

Life sometimes puts us in situations where we question who is in charge. Sometimes we wish we knew so we could talk to someone, anyone. We experience low times when we feel so alone and without comfort or direction. At times like these, we yearn for a "keeper."

One reason I like the reading in John is because it reminds us that we are not alone. We do have a "keeper." Jesus promised the disciples he would not leave them alone but would send the Holy Spirit.

All we have to do is love Christ, follow his precepts, and he will send us the "Counselor." The "Spirit of Truth" will be with us.

Now I'm not sure that the Holy Spirit will keep us from going to the wrong funeral, but it will surely help us understand the pain of death and the hope of resurrection for all people. *Prayer:* Dear Lord, I need your Holy Spirit in my life.

May 8, 2005

7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

Everyone should be part of starting some group or cause at least once in their lives. The book of Acts tells the story of the starting of the Church. It has been my privilege to be a part of the founding of a group called the National Child Care Development Association. This group consists of people who have worked with childcare organizations and saw a special need to organize for the benefit of their common ministry.

This has not been easy work. Keeping interest high, providing appropriate guidance, resources and linking common interests can be very difficult. This sounds so much like the local church. What guidance does the book of Acts give us?

According to the book of Acts, the disciples stayed together and they were constantly in prayer. As United Methodists, we are connected even if we are continents apart. Through our connectional ministries, our local ministries reach around the world. The sun never sets on the ministries of any local church because we are all together making disciples for Christ.

As for prayer, we are discovering every day the power of prayer. Let us pray for our local ministries, our district superintendents, our bishops, our church agencies and for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world.

May 15, 2005

Day of Pentecost

Acts 2: 1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 7:37-39

Two years ago, my family attended a family reunion in New York. I was privileged to see aunts, uncles, and cousins whom I had not seen in over twenty years. Some of the family members there I had never met before.

We discovered that our family is much like any other American family. We all have the same roots but we are all different. Among those who attended were the "All American" boys and girls as well as those who wore their black clothes, chains, and hair dyed unusual colors.

The dynamics were amazing. Watching over 80 people—some who barely knew each other—come together for a common cause was remarkable. All of the stories told had the common theme of family unity.

It was much the same way on the Day of Pentecost. People from many different places and cultures came together with the common theme of family unity. On the Day of Pentecost, it was discovered for the first time that we are all God's children.

In celebration of Pentecost, should we not celebrate our commonality? On this day, the Church was born out of a crucified and risen Lord. The promised Holy Spirit descended upon the people in Jerusalem and the world began to be called together as the children of God.

Lord, on this day we celebrate the birth of your family coming into the world. □



Theodore (Ted) Dean Frost, CFRE is Executive Director of the United Methodist Foundation of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference, Inc., in Springfield, Illinois.