

Resurrection Mission Impossible

Easter 5 May 15, 2022
Rev. Gail Minnick, Preaching

First Reading ~ *Acts 11:1-18*

The apostles and the community in Judea heard that Gentiles, too, had accepted the word of God. As a result, when Peter went up to Jerusalem, some of the Jewish believers took issue with him. "So, you have been visiting the Gentiles and eating with them, have you?" they said. Peter then explained the whole affair to them step by step from the beginning: "One day when I was in the town of Joppa, I fell into a trance while at prayer and had a vision of something like a big sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners. This sheet came quite close to me. I watched it intently and saw in it all sorts of animals and wild beasts—everything possible that could walk, crawl or fly. Then, I heard a voice that said to me, 'Now, Peter, make your sacrifice and eat.' I replied, 'I can't, my God. Nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth!' And a second time the voice spoke from heaven, 'Don't call profane what God has made clean.' This happened three times, then the sheet and what was in it were drawn up to heaven again.

"Just at that moment, three couriers stopped outside the house where we were staying; they had been sent from Caesaria to fetch me, and the Spirit told me to have no hesitation about returning with them. These six believers came with me as well, and we entered Cornelius' house. He told us he had seen an angel standing in the house who had said, 'Send messengers to Joppa and bring back Simon, known as Peter; he has a message for you that will save you and your entire household.'

"I had hardly begun to speak when the Holy Spirit came down on them in the same way she came on us in the beginning, and I remembered what Christ had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' I realized that God was giving them the same gift that had been given to us when we came to believe in our Savior Jesus Christ. And who am I to stand in God's way?" This account satisfied them, and they gave glory to God, saying: "God has granted the repentance that leads to life—even to the Gentiles!"

Second Reading ~ *John 13:31-35*

Once Judas left, Jesus said, "Now is the Chosen One glorified and God is glorified as well. If has been God, God will in turn glorify the Chosen One and will do so very soon. My little children, I won't be with you much longer. You'll look for me, but what I said to the Temple authorities, I say to you: Where I am going, you cannot come. I give you a new commandment: Love one another. And your to love one another the way I have loved you. This is how all will know that you're my disciples: that you truly love one another."

Third Reading ~ *adapted from Greg Paul in "God in the Alley"*

Being sent may be enough to guarantee my own presence, but it doesn't necessarily follow that I will BE the presence of Jesus too. For this, I need to learn how to truly be among the people to whom I am sent, as Jesus was among us. Being among people means being in their midst, not outside. It means being with them, not being over them. It means not looking away from their agony or humiliation, but beholding it, and having the courage to be also wounded by their pain.

One cold February night several years ago, my wife, Karen and my eldest son, Caleb, then eleven, were walking up Yonge Street. Looking across the street, they saw a man they knew who had been in drug rehab for several months. We received word that he left the program earlier that day and there he was, drunk sitting against the window of a Thai fast-food joint, panhandling.

Crossing the street, they stood in front of him....Karen wept and said "Oh, Derek!" Caleb simply bent down, put his arms around Derek and told him he loved him. That's being present! And you can imagine what the people watching from inside the restaurant must have been thinking as they stood at the counter munching their spring rolls.