

## ***One Shining Moment***

Psalm 30; Acts 9:1-6

Today we continue in the Season of Eastertide, celebrating the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Anointed One. We celebrate the abundance of love and grace poured out for us by God through Jesus' resurrection. We celebrate the abundance of God's love that is exhibited every day and in so many ways.

In fact, that's one point made by this passage from the Gospel according to John. In this third appearance to the disciples after his resurrection, they have returned to their labor, fishing to support themselves. Jesus shows up in the midst of their hopelessness, since they have caught no fish. Jesus shows up and instructs them to cast the nets on the other side. That seems absurd. They've been at it for hours and nothing! Why would it be any different on the opposite side of the boat? At the same time I imagine, they must have thought they had nothing to lose. And they did as Jesus instructed, – casting the net on the other side of the boat.

Their haul, the net filled to the point of breaking, 153 fish! That's an abundant number, 153 fish. By this large and, yes, ridiculous amount of fish we are, once again, reminded that God's grace cannot be limited to the incarnation, to the crucifixion, to the tomb, to the resurrection, and certainly not to the end of a Gospel story called John. Indeed, Resurrection is abundance. Resurrection is hope. Resurrection is grace upon grace.

But it would be wrong to make this all about Grace. There are many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. This sermon is not simply *about* grace. This is a sermon that points to what grace upon grace really can be -- a lot of fish, when you least expect it, just like the wine at the Wedding in Cana, when all hope is gone, when you wonder what you are doing, when you think there is no future, when your well has dried up, when you doubt that grace is true, when you question if grace is for you, Jesus shows up and shows off.

Jesus shows up and gives us instructions that when followed, produce ridiculously, abundantly, unbelievable results. We need this. This is the resurrection story we need. Desperately! All of us! That we will, indeed, experience the truth of the resurrection beyond the empty tomb. That Jesus will always show up on the shore; will invite us to share a meal once again, because abundance really means abundance when it comes to God. Why? Because it seems that God truly does love the world.

God's love for the world is abundant – greater than we can imagine, greater the human mind can begin to comprehend. God's love for the world is beyond our greatest expectations.

And, to further illustrate that abundant love, look at the passage from the Acts of the Apostles. Saul's anger had led to his continual persecution of Jesus. Saul had a problem. Saul was a problem ...for God. Saul was the one who held the coats for those who stoned Stephen. Saul was the one who dragged men and women out of their homes to be thrown into prison. Saul was the one commissioned by the high priest to bring Jesus and his followers, bound hand and feet, back to Jerusalem. Saul had murder in his eyes as this story of his conversion begins. Even so, God loved Saul and went to extraordinary means to turn Saul around and give him a new life.

God loved Saul enough to show up and drown his anger in a heavenly light that blinded him. In that one shining moment, like the call of Moses, the divine spoke to Saul from the light, and Saul encountered the risen Christ himself.

The eyes that were filled with anger can now see nothing. For three days Saul sat, eating nothing, thinking and waiting. By the time Ananias was convinced by God to go to Saul and share the gospel message with him, Saul was ready to hear. As the Holy Spirit entered into the heart of Saul, eyes once filled with rage, lose their scales. Through abundant love and the grace of God through Jesus Christ, Saul becomes a new creation - Paul, overcome by joy, goes from synagogue to synagogue praising God and preaching the gospel.

Thus Psalm 30 - pain, anger, rage, and emptiness are turned to joy, and mourning is turned to dancing. Grace beyond anything Saul/Paul could have imagined. Grace beyond our imagination. Grace beyond our calculation. Grace even beyond our scriptural determination.

We are Easter people. We are people of hope. The song of Easter is one that melts the heart, sets toes to tapping, makes our bodies sway, inspires us to love, and compels us to share it. We are called to be Easter people. We are called to celebrate a Risen Lord. So today I encourage you to let the joy of Easter become a part of who you are, causing you to dance, to celebrate every day, that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life. Amen.