

Third Sunday of Easter, Year C

April 18, 2010

Acts 9: 1-20, Psalm 30, Revelation 5: 11-14, John 21: 1-19

Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

{1} Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest *{2}* and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. *{3}* Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. *{4}* He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" *{5}* He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. *{6}* But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." *[7]* The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. *{8}* Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. *{9}* For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. *{10}* Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." *{11}* The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, *{12}* and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." *{13}* But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; *{14}* and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." *{15}* But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; *{16}* I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." *{17}* So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." *{18}* And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, *{19}* and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, *{20}* and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."]

Psalm 30

{1} I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. *{2}* O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. *{3}* O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. *{4}* Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. *{5}* For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. *{6}* As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." *{7}* By your favor, O LORD, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed. *{8}* To you, O LORD, I cried, and to the LORD I made supplication: *{9}* "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? *{10}* Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be my helper!" *{11}* You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, *{12}* so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

Revelation 5:11-14

{11} Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, *{12}* singing with full voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" *{13}* Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" *{14}* And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshiped.

John 21:1-19

{1} After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. *{2}* Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. *{3}* Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. *{4}* Just after

daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. {5} Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." {6} He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. {7} That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. {8} But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. {9} When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. {10} Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." {11} So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. {12} Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. {13} Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. {14} This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. {15} When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." {16} A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." {17} He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. {18} Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." {19} (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

You know by now that one of my favorite ways to describe the message of Easter is as God doing that “raspberry thing” (To those reading, sorry I can’t recreate that sound in words) and then saying, “Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah! You can’t ever make stop loving you!”

It is a bit “cheeky” and irreverent, but there is a lot of truth in it. Easter is about the triumph of life over death, of love over hatred, of light over darkness, of truth over lies. It is about the triumph of God’s love for us and for the world, no matter how hard we try to say “No”.

Well, as it turns out, thanks to the readings for today, I have yet another somewhat “cheeky” and irreverent way to think about Easter. You’ve all heard this deliciously and delightfully sarcastic phrase before and perhaps you have even been lucky enough to use it. Rumor has it that it originated with teenagers, which comes as no surprise to me.

Anyway, here it is.

“No Way!”

“Way.”

By the way, that response requires *just* the right amount of attitude.

As I've said before, the Gospels and other New Testament stories are silent about what "happened" at the moment of resurrection, focusing instead on the empty tomb, the angelic witnesses, etc. If I had to guess, here's what I would say: There is a bright light. The stone rolls away. Jesus appears and says, "Way."

Anyway, if ever there was a "poster child" for "No Way!", it was Saul of Tarsus. "No way could God have chosen that failure and heretic Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah." "No way could His message be in line with what I know to be true about God and the Bible." "No way am I going to let this Jesus s stuff get too out of hand." "No way will I ever change my mind."

No way. No how. Seemingly no way to stop him.

To Saul of Tarsus, God said, "Way."

It is interesting to note that Saul was on a "business trip of sorts", not expecting, looking for, or even wanting anything different. Nope, for Saul it was just going to be another day.

Then there's Ananias, already a disciple of Jesus, apparently quite pious, and someone who seemed to recognize the voice of God. In this case, when God informed Ananias of some of God's unusual plans for a certain Saul of Tarsus, the response was, "No way!" "Not *that one*, Lord!" "Don't you know what he has done?" "Don't you know who he is?" Ananias wanted God to reconsider. All blessed Ananias could see were obstacles. (Who, by the way, are we all too eager to "write off"?)

To Ananias, God's response was, "Way." (Hopefully with plenty of attitude.)

The disciples gathered by the shore of the Sea of Tiberius on that uneventful morning certainly appeared to be without direction, without hope, without plans, without a future, without a way forward. Scholars debate about just what it was they were doing there and why they decided to go fishing. Perhaps they were just hanging out and passing time. Maybe they had tried to escape from Jerusalem as well as from their recent pasts. Maybe they were trying to return to the life they once knew. No real present and no apparent future. No way would or could any one of these losers ever amount to anything, especially in the service of Jesus. They just seemed to never "get it". They seemed to get it wrong most of the time. And Peter was the worst of them. In the Gospels, if ever someone has something stupid or impulsive to say, chances are good that it would be Peter doing the saying. Bumbling,

fumbling Peter, who actually *got dressed* in order to jump into the water! Peter, the poster child for all around failure and “least likely to succeed.”

Where everything and everyone seemed to say “No way!”, *God* said, “Way!”

Last, but by no means least, the strange vision of the Book of Revelation assures us that God always has and always will say “Way!”, no matter how much the world, or even the church, tries to say, “No Way!” In the ancient world, “Worthy!” was the acclamation for Caesar. Here we are reminded that the way of God, the way of the crucified Savior, is the real thing worthy of trust and hope and honor.

God says the same to us. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, forever.

What do we need to do?

Come and have breakfast. Stretch out your hands to receive *the Way*, the truth, and the life.

O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good. The mercy of God endures forever!

AMEN.