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Acts 9:36-43

Psalm 23

John 10:22-30

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May 12, 2019

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

Mother's Day

Grace and peace to you from the risen Christ. Amen.

There are moments in life – where everything becomes different, everything changes and one's whole perspective is renewed, charted on a different course. For example, when I became a mom (and I'm sure that my experience is much the same as any parent's) I remember looking at our daughter and realizing nothing would ever be the same. Not just because of the reality of feeding and diapers and toys but, becoming a parent changed me inside, changed the way I saw each day, and certainly changed the way I saw the future and everything else that leads up to it.

Faith, believing in Christ, is like this too. Now, I was baptized as an infant and while I don't remember the day, all along my life the threads of belief have been intricately woven into the fabric of my own being. I can't imagine life without it. It has changed the way I think, led me to work in job that I never thought I would, it has called me to think differently about how I spend my time, to be generous, see people differently, to work for justice, to be grateful, trust, love... and much more... and all in ways I don't think I would have without it. Faith has changed the way I understand my mistakes and imperfections, as well as, plans for the future.

And if there ever was a "thing" that had the power to change us, the ability to change whole communities and countries and yes, even the globe – I would bet on God, in whatever manifestation we know, to be the change that we so desire.

Tabitha's life was changed when she was resurrected. Wouldn't it be neat to be able to hear what happened in her life *after* this happened? She already was a caring and hard working woman, but to be dead and then raised? Imagine the stories she told her grandchildren! Tabitha's story is actually one of 5 resurrection stories in the First Testament! There's the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:11-17) then Jarius' daughter (8:49-56) Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44) and Eutychus who was the one so bored by Peter's day long sermon that he fell asleep and died when he fell out a window (Acts 20:7-12). All powerful stories of people's lives being radically changed.

These miraculous examples we sometimes feel are nearly impossible to believe. The point isn't necessarily whether we do, or not. They are tools used by ancient writers to get our attention. You know how it goes, in the busyness of life we can miss important things that are all around us. So biblical writers used "special effects" so that people would stop and look and believe. As Luke says, "this became known all over Joppa and because of it, many came to believe in Jesus" (Acts 9:42). So the story traveled around for a long time and even people who were not there to see it believed because of it.

We're no stranger to special effects, every magazine cover or movie has it. Last week, Ken and I went to see Avengers: End Game. It's a movie with just about every superhero you could possibly fit on one screen! There was Spiderman, and flame throwing fighters, massive-hammer-wielding Thor, Captain America, Iron Man, Ant Man, and many more. They drive cool cars, can fly, and fend off bullets. And while we understand that this is entertainment (we know it's all lights and CG) underneath the spectacular events and action, the story does much more.

In the movie, when the world was devastated after half the population died, End Game shows the amazing ability of people when they work together to solve problems. Heroes with their unusual and astonishing gifts are given the strength they need at just the right time. And even when the darkest hour comes and all hope seems lost, help arrives and the world is not ended, but restored. Community, sharing of gifts, hope for the future – you could almost begin to imagine this movie as "Revelation II."

This is the point of the Bible's spectacular stories. In them we begin to realize that God is big enough to address our persistent and massive problems. We don't have fire-throwing superheroes to protect us; we don't know how to travel back in time to fix what is broken today. We wouldn't know where to begin even in how to put on any one of those remarkable costumes! But, we do see what happens when we stand together to face the challenges we know. We look to the future with hope over despair. We choose to welcome all over building walls. We value life in all its diversity. We seek to work for peace. We're learning to care for the environment. And this is all because of what we have seen and heard and learned in Jesus.

Jesus is much more than a marquee advertising the latest and greatest, much more than the much disputed title "Messiah," much more than a few pages lifted out of an ancient manuscript. As Christ says himself, we can know who he is by watching what he does. And what he does is he changes us.

There is nothing in the world that is safe and secure. You can't invest your money without risk (even putting it in your mattress isn't failsafe) you can't be sure that your job is secure, you can't know for certain that no harm will come to you or those you love, you can't be guaranteed health or even to live as long as the expected average. Do don't cling to these things.

Cling to Christ, by whom we are made different, we live differently. We find comfort in promise and are fed with assurance of bread and wine. Let Jesus walk with you through fear and doubt. Turn to the holy One when difficult decisions are before you. Trust not in the ways of the world and its special effects, but in the one who stands the test of time.

This is why Jesus was known as the Good Shepherd, as one who has a constant eye watching over us. It's not an image that needs many bells and whistles or even a stunt person, but it still helps us understand a lot about who Jesus is.

May we too, be known as Jesus' family by the actions we take: guarding the way of peace, welcoming all, uplifting the oppressed for this is God's call. Amen.