

Easter 3
April 10, 2016

The Rev. Jeanette M. Repp
St. Peter's, San Pedro

In my Easter sermon, I spoke about how in Christ the invisible is made visible, the impossible possible, and the unbelievable, believable. Over the last few weeks, since Jesus' resurrection, we have heard of the 4 appearances that the resurrected Jesus makes to different groups of disciples: four scenes in which the Christ who has died, is revealed alive! Four assurances that death will never contain the life that Jesus offers!

The first appearance was on Easter day, when we heard how Mary encountered Jesus in the garden outside the tomb. Before she realizes that this is her friend & teacher, she mistakes him for the gardener. Last Sunday, we heard of two encounters with Jesus: one from late on Easter day, when Jesus appears to the disciples in the house where they had been staying. Only Thomas is missing and does not believe. Jesus, then, returns again the following week, and this time Thomas is there, and sees with his own eyes, and confesses his own belief. And Jesus says to Thomas, "Have you believed me because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

These first 3 appearances take place just after Jesus' crucifixion. The terror of the week before has subsided, but Jesus' disciples still feel lost & afraid; not quite sure how to go on. And yet, through these stories our gospel writer, John, helps us see how God inched God's way back into their hearts & lives; even after the impossible has happened.

It is the fourth and final appearance that we hear of from John today. Some time has passed — we don't know how much. We do know that the disciples have left Jerusalem and returned to their homes in Galilee. Now that they are back to the relative safety of home, there is some peace, but they still don't quite know what to do with themselves or what to make of those strange appearances that happened just after Jesus' death.

Peter decides to go fishing, and several of the others decide to go with him. They don't have any luck, though, and the next morning, as they are coming back to shore, they find a man standing there who tells them to cast the net again, to the right side of the boat this time — and of course, the man is Jesus, and of course, they haul in so many fish that the net is nearly torn. Jesus then invites them to sit down on the beach, around the fire he has made, to break bread with him once more, and it is then they truly see him, again, and perhaps even realize that he will always be with them even when he is truly gone. This is likewise when they really get the power of the resurrection.

Of course, now, Jesus is truly gone, and yet we also know that when we look with the eyes of faith, we too begin to see Jesus in the oddest places: the seashore, the garden, the street. Sometimes Jesus calls us to join him in solitude in these places, and sometimes he is the one who is hungry and cold and asks for our help. Still other times, he is the one who asks us to join him, and nourishes us. In the

toughest of times, it may be hardest to believe God is with us, and yet God is persistent, just as Jesus was with those first disciples. And, always, always, it is Jesus calling us to make this unbelievable love that God has for us more visible to the world.

If the Gospel writer John were alive today, what stories could you share of how our God has been revealed to you? . . .of how you have revealed God to the world?