

4/18/2010

THE FIRST LESSON Acts 9:1-22

(Saul meets Jesus and is turned from persecuting the church to Paul who preaches the Gospel.)

1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. 11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." 13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord-- Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-- has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. 21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" 22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Revelation 5: (1-7) 8-14

(John is told of the new song is sung in heaven)

1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I

wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

THE GOSPEL LESSON

John 21:1-19

(The risen Jesus restores Peter.)

1 Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. 5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. 6 He said, "**Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.**" When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. 7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. 9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." 11 Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time

Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.

18 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

INTRO On Monday I took my grandson fishing again. The second time in a month. Only this time we were a little more adventurous. Last time I took him fishing from the truck. This time I left the truck parked in the woods, put him in a sled, and pulled him out to the lake. I got him out of the sled and was drilling holes to fish from. But, walking on ice can be a little tricky, especially at 2. He fell, and was about to cry. I got over to him and picked him up, and made sure he was alright. I'm not sure he wanted to risk falling again, though.

I. Life is like that for adults as well as for 2 year olds. When we slip and fall in life, sometimes we hurt so much we aren't sure we can get up and get going again.

A. That is the situation the disciples found themselves facing in today's after Easter account.

1. The disciples were joyful at Jesus' rising, but they still remembered the hurt of Jesus's death.
2. All of them remembered deserting Jesus in his time of suffering.
3. Peter especially was mindful of his denying that he even knew the Lord he loved and followed.
4. The disciples had fallen. Their failure hurt. They weren't sure they wanted to get up again, they could get up again, and follow Jesus.

B. So, are you hurting from a fall?

1. Have you disappointed yourself? Hurt another? Failed to live up to God's call?
2. Have you been hurt by another? Or has tragedy hurt your heart?
3. I had a friend who was active in his church as a child. But, his pastor disappointed him and the whole congregation. That man hurt so much he did not go back to church again until he was in his late 30's. He wasn't sure he wanted to get up again.

II. I have often heard about another child who fell on the ice. When she was 10 years old my wife fell on the ice in her front yard, in Memphis of all places. She broke her arm. Having her feet move under her, like ice skating or skiing, is understandably difficult. Knowing that is one

reason I hurried to my grandson.

A. In our Bible reading Jesus knew the pain of the disciples. Jesus knew the failure of the 12 and their hurt. He knew Peter's shame and guilt. He knew they were afraid to try again. They had failed and they hurt and they didn't want to fail, and didn't want to hurt again.

B. So, Jesus came intentionally, personally, and gently to restore them after the fall. This story is told in two parts.

1. Jesus had first called Peter and Andrew, James and John, with a miraculous catch of fish. So, one morning after Jesus' rose, as they were fishing but not catching, Jesus helped them again. (6) **"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."** The Lord who originally called them with a miraculous catch, knew their failure, knew their pain, and came and gently called them back. This was his forgiveness and His call back to discipleship. Do you see how gentle and loving He was?

2. Peter had denied Jesus 3 times, so Jesus asked him 3 times about his love. Even though Peter had already failed in his love for Jesus, Jesus called Peter to feed his lambs. In spite of the failure of Peter's love, Jesus still in forgiveness called him, **"Follow me."**

C. After the fall, Jesus Gently, personally, called Peter and the disciples, to get up again. He took them by the hand, pulled them up again, and gently got them going again, with his forgiveness.

III. Today in worship we do not stand up and proclaim how good we are. We come as people who have failed, who have sinned against God and each other, who have been hurt.

A. Our Lord knows our hurt and pain, and disappointment, our failure and our sin.

1. But Jesus died for our sin.
2. His rising is stronger than our failure.

B. Personally, lovingly, gently, Jesus takes us by the hand.

1. He calls us to confess our sins and receive His forgiveness. We come to the Lord's supper to receive forgiveness and live and salvation. God knows our failure.
2. In spite of our sin he forgives us.
3. In spite of our hurt and failure he picks us up and in love says to us, **"Follow me."**

CONCLUSION - My grandson got up and kept going. It wasn't easy. He wasn't sure he liked fishing on the ice instead of from the truck. So, I moved. I loaded up the gear, and packed him up, and drove out onto another lake about 15 miles away. He played with the dog, caught a fish, and enjoyed himself, in spite of the fall. Maybe he'll follow me again next time.

Jesus death forgives us. His rising wins victory over our failure. He puts out his hand today to people who have fallen and failed and says, "Let me pick you up. I still have work for you" **"Follow me."**

