

**“Start Seeing...”**  
**18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – 9/23/18 – Mk 9:30-37**

**“Start Seeing Motorcycles”** was the warning sign on bumper sticker up ahead of me. It made me smile, because having a husband who rides motorcycles has heightened my awareness in that regard. But it did make me think about the phenomenon of “seeing.” Right now, I’ve Started Seeing Houses...I didn’t know I hadn’t been seeing them, but now that we’re getting ready to redo the exterior of our home, I can’t NOT see siding, stucco, color, everywhere around me! It’s sort of like what happens when you get a new make of car. In an instant you start seeing ALL the Volvos that have always been there, surrounding you on road. But how do you Start Seeing Something that you didn’t even know you weren’t seeing?

**As we continue in the Gospel of Mark today**, we are entering the final stage of Jesus’ ministry. An additional 4000 have been fed on miraculous food. Jesus has experienced the Transfiguration on a mountaintop (including a visit with Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the Prophets – in other words, the whole of the Holy Scriptures.) At the foot of that mountain, he has healed a lad the 12 couldn’t heal. Peter has confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, voiced his concerns about Jesus’ itinerary into Jerusalem and subsequently been rebuked. Now Jesus has predicted his passion for a second time, and the reality of his journey to the cross is beginning to sink in.

Walking and talking together, Jesus basically tells them is it time to ‘*Start Seeing Resurrection.*’ Now, you can’t train yourself to see something you didn’t know you weren’t seeing, unless or until you become aware of what that might be. But once you DO see it, you can’t UN-SEE it. The disciples had never **seen** Resurrection – so they had no way to Start Seeing Resurrection, **yet**. And, they were afraid. Afraid, because they didn’t understand Jesus. Afraid, because they **did** understand “betrayed” and “killed.” Afraid to get it wrong, afraid to look stupid, or like Peter, receive a rebuke from Jesus.

If they had trusted fully, they might not have asked for **answers**. They might have asked for **insight**. If they had trusted fully, they might have asked Why? Why would Jesus die? Death was not a part of the expectation for the Messiah. So why? How did death become part of the story? But, unable to understand, trust or confront their own fears, like the rich young ruler asking how to inherit eternal life, they “went away sorrowfully.”

The talk turned to familiar topics: Power. Supremacy. Winning. After all, wasn’t that why they were following Jesus? For something greater than what they left behind? One wonders what kind of greatness they desired: The High Priest? Herod? Caesar? Or maybe it was simply trying to figure out “who gets what Jesus is saying THE BEST.” Back in the house, they gather around Jesus. He sits. He sighs. He looks around for some illustration that they might understand. And there is the perfect example: A child. A little child, a toddler, maybe. One might imagine this one as an orphan or an heir (for the Greek is not specific.) So for now, let’s remove any value at all: picture a little girl. What a great place to Start Seeing Resurrection...

**But what does it mean to Start Seeing Resurrection?** Without using theological terms, means simply, *Start Seeing New Life. Start Seeing a Fresh Start, a Do-Over. A Makeover.* It means start noticing, start being aware – yes, even, start expecting what you cannot expect or envision.

Last Saturday, Vicar Emily and I attended a workshop on Congregational Vitality (an initiative in our Synod) and we learned that being a vital congregation is not about the

numbers, it's about relationship - letting folks in on a life-changing one on one with God and God's people. In essence, a vital congregation understands what it means to seek, to notice, to SEE the possibilities for New Life in what appear to be old, useless or dying things. They have learned to look beyond the present and see potential through God-eyes.

**To his followers, Jesus was hurtling toward the ending** – the ending of his life, the ending of his ministry and miracles and the ending of their hopes and dreams for their lives and futures. They couldn't imagine that to God, the cross was the beginning, and their accomplishments and failures contributed nothing. It didn't matter if they failed in the fishing industry, or were reduced to collecting taxes for Rome, or if they doubted, betrayed or denied their Lord. Their greatness was not rooted in what they did, but in the love that God had for them.

We know the feeling, don't we? We try very hard to be the best at what we do – to embody excellence, to top the list, to earn our keep, to win top dog. And yet we also know what it feels like to fail - to run out of steam, to miss the mark, to depend on the kindness of strangers, to lose at love. We even know too keenly what it feels like to doubt our faith, to give up hope. And yet our greatness, too, is not rooted in what we do, but it comes from the love that God has for us.

**God has been way ahead of us all along.** The current musical at KC Repertory theatre is called *"Last Days of Summer"* and tells of a major league 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman for the NY Giants in the 1940's named Charlie Banks who befriends a kid with no heroes and learns how to love. At the end, the boy, Joey, receives a letter from Charlie, written before the ballplayer sacrificed his life to save his buddies at Guadalcanal. The closing of the letter went something like this: *"I told you I'd never leave you, and I won't. I'm just up ahead of you now, watching to see all the possible Joeys that are on the way to where I am."* God has been way ahead of us all along. So, as we live into our own futures, may we always be looking beyond what is right in front of us. Let us expect that whatever we don't understand right now will finally yield to new life. Jesus was teaching the 12 how to Start Seeing Resurrection. And he is asking us to do the same. Start right now. Watch for new life. Expect rebirth. Look forward to new beginnings, that often come disguised as endings. Believe that God has never left you and even now is working to make all things new. 'Cause that's just how our heavenly Father works. Amen.

Pastor Susan Langhauser  
Advent Lutheran Church, Olathe, KS

**Resources:** Mary Hinkle Shore, *Christianity Today*; Elisabeth Johnson, *Working Preacher*; Bob Chell, *Faith Lens*; *Last Days of Summer* by Steve Kluger.

COPYRIGHT