

## Easter 7A Knowing What Counts

Acts 1:6-14; Ps. 68: 1-10, 33-36; 1Peter 4:12-14; John 17:1-11

Throughout the Easter Season our scriptures have emphasized knowing – knowing that the resurrection appearances were really Jesus showing up again, knowing that we, as followers and disciples of his, have work to do in the world, knowing that a companion spirit is promised to all.

There is an intimacy to knowing someone else and in being known. That intimacy is shown in today's gospel which places us with Jesus and his friends at the table of sharing, the Last Supper. He lingers with his friends on the night before his death; he prays for them and offers some final operating instructions. Jesus is knowing all over the place, says Jan Richardson. He knows his friends well and he wants them to know what his life in God and with God can mean to them and to the world.

My youngest daughter sent me an article that she found important. You could say that it is an insight for those of us who want to live long and well. There are five top regrets people speak about as their lives end, things that they want others to know. (The article was written by a palliative care nurse.)

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me. It is part of paying attention to dreams unfulfilled. Choices made or not made – don't give up on following what matters to you.
2. I wish I didn't work so hard. This was expressed by every male patient although I imagine quite a few of us working women would agree. Sometimes accepting a simpler lifestyle, less income, may offer more space for relationships. Maybe I am important in my work but I am not irreplaceable. I want to spend time building memories, not kingdoms.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings. Keeping peace by keeping quiet costs us something. Honesty may take relationships to a new wholeness. If we stay hidden we are never really known or valued for our true selves.
4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends. Friendships require time and effort to tend; they ask us to think beyond our selves. I was privileged to officiate at a funeral this week for a woman who kept her friends – lots and lots of them showed up. And the eulogy was delivered by the widower's friend of fifty years.
5. I wish I had let myself be happier. Many don't realize that happiness is a choice; we don't have to be critical and unhappy all the time. Fear of change makes some folks pretend to themselves and to others that they are content – they forget how to be silly or have fun or play and laugh deeply. Do you remember what really gives you joy?

Jesus is releasing his friends into the next part of their journey. They could sit in an upper room and wait for a kingdom to come and find them. Or they can assume some agency in cooperation with God's spirit and move out into a new world. Ask Michele about her Habitat build in Honduras; ask Louise about traveling with a circus.

The apostles ask for safety and security – how about a return to the peace of David's kingdom, they ask. But Jesus instead offers them a chance to go into new territory, telling others in distant places what a

life full of God can look like, what a fully engaged humanity is capable of. They were hometown boys, raised in Ottawa, went to school here, worked and raised their families here....what are they doing in New Orleans? Or Joplin, Missouri?

The packers came early yesterday morning = two young women from St. Lucia, their friend and boss, and a young man heading for college on a football scholarship who thinks he wants and needs a tattoo of St. Michael as his protector. Gradually we shared stories, spoke about politics – Canadian and US – over a pizza lunch at the dining room table. Late in the day one of them came to me as I was cleaning up my art space. “Why do you think people are afraid to die? And they are Christians! Their faith isn’t strong enough,” she decided. But I wonder if we don’t want to die because we haven’t learned how to live.

Jesus wants us to enter blessing; the word comes from the Old English *blod*, blood used in acts of ritual consecration. Jesus wants his friends to be part of his lifeblood. Having that blessing in our veins as part of his body in the world, full of meaning. Next week is cross over time: Pentecost is fire, conversion, breath. It is knowing that the time for doing things differently is here. Amen.

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