**4/7/24**

**Framework, Plan, or “Idear”**

**John 20:19-31**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Good Morning…. Happy Easter… blessings to each and every one of you out there this morning. We are reminded that we are indeed Easter people. We are also reminded that we are in a season together these next 7 weeks as Easter does not just end at the cross, or at the tomb, but it continues on with Jesus’ very victory over death and the grave. We are also forever reminded that we belong, and that is exactly why we join with one another for Worship. Without one another church is not even possible, as this building would just be four walls with several things inside of it. In Easter, and throughout the year we are indeed reminded of our continued call to join with one another to explore the Word deeper. We are also reminded that we are called to support one another just like the disciples did oh so many years ago.

Thank God that our Lord and Savior pulled off the biggest miracle of all time. He held true to the very words he spoke. Unfortunately, most people could only see or hear the story of a physical building of a temple being destroyed and rebuilt in three days. From all understanding and conventional thought, they knew that this was just simply impossible since it took so many years to build with so many skilled people and strong hands. However, Jesus was testing their understanding and trying to get them to think outside of the box as he was speaking of the very temple of his mind, body, and spirit being torn down and destroyed and then rebuilt and him rising in three days! People were just not able to fathom what they had never seen or heard before. They struggled with the very essence of believing. Sometimes we all are very much like Thomas in our Gospel story today, and we lack that very belief, and unfortunately, we too have doubt. However, we also are afforded the very ability to rise above those ashes of doubt and announce loudly with one another that Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed!** Alleluia!

Now, I must admit that I initially debated standing up here and shooting from the hip without a script today. This especially was true after receiving the news this morning from Fran of Ed’s passing. Then, I came to realize that Ed would have never started a project or done work without some kind of framework, plan, or for that very fact an “Idear.” I also came to realize that no great show, no great event, and not even WrestleMania after 40 years would be so foolish to not have a guiding framework. I also came to realize that I would not even be able to stand up here and break things down and talk to you about the Easter story and the very Gospel story of today if we did not have the most important of all guiding frameworks called the Bible. This book is the very foundation and understanding of the very accounts of all that happened in life that is so real. This book is the true essence of what we believe and what we hold true and firm to. Without the accounts of so many authors that were inspired by God we would be struggling to even understand or comprehend the blessings and life that Jesus and others lived before us.

With that being said let me share a story with you that I shared in 2016 when I spoke about this very topic. It is cool revisiting old sermons and old thought processes. It is also cool being able to think differently as life and so many other things have changed and shaped my thoughts, my mindset, and my understanding. This story is even more so cool today because it gets back to the very essence of what I was speaking of before where Jesus tried to get people to think outside of the box when he spoke of his very temple being torn down and rebuilt in three days. So, here we go with the…. **Story of The** **Three Trees**.

““Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The first little tree looked up at the stars and said: “I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I’ll be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!”

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. “I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful kings. I’ll be the strongest ship in the world!”

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in a busy town. “I don’t want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when people stop to look at me, they’ll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world.”

Years passed. The rain came, the sun shone, and the little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain.

The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, “This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me.” With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell.

“Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest. I shall hold wonderful treasure!” the first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, “This tree is strong. It is perfect for me.” With a swoop of his shining axe, the second tree fell.

“Now I shall sail mighty waters!” thought the second tree. “I shall be a strong ship for mighty kings!”

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven.

But the woodcutter never even looked up. “Any kind of tree will do for me,” he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe, the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter’s shop. But the carpenter fashioned the tree into a feedbox for animals.

The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold, nor with treasure. She was coated with sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead, the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail on an ocean, or even a river; instead, she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard.

“What happened?” the once tall tree wondered. “All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God...”

Many, many days and night passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams.

But one night, golden starlight poured over the first tree as a young woman placed her newborn baby in the feedbox.

“I wish I could make a cradle for him,” her husband whispered.

The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and the sturdy wood. “This manger is beautiful,” she said.

And suddenly the first tree knew she was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree quietly sailed out into the lake.

Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered. She knew she did not have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through with the wind and the rain.

The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand, and said, “Peace.” The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun.

And suddenly the second tree knew she was carrying the king of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldiers nailed a man’s hands to her.

She felt ugly and harsh and cruel.

But on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth tremble with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God’s love had changed everything.

It had made the third tree strong.

And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God.

That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

The next time you feel down because you didn’t get what you want, sit tight and be happy because God is thinking of something better to give you.” (Source unknown) (3)

With that very story, legend, or folklore I must admit that my sermon this morning took many different twists and turns in my mind since I started my research just a few short days ago. Now, I realized that I easily could have given you everything and anything about doubt, and focused on the story of Thomas. I could have focused on his words and thoughts demanding that he would need to see for his very self in order to believe. I could have focused on his nervousness and frustration of not being there the first time with his fellow disciples and getting to see the Risen Christ. I could have made this sermon all about Thomas. Then, of course I easily could have focused on how The Gospel of “John tells us that the disciples of Jesus are gathered together behind locked doors, in fear of the Jewish authorities. For the threat to their lives was real. Not only did the disciples fear that they might also be accused and sentenced to the same death that Jesus had to endure because of their association with him, but according to Matthew, additional charges loomed against them. They were accused of stealing a corpse and perpetuating a hoax, both crimes punishable by death.” (4) I could have even focused on the very greeting and sense of calmness and comfort Jesus provided. I could have very well focused on the very greeting of, “Peace be with you,” as Jesus entered the locked room and greeted his disciples, and then Thomas on his return a week later. There are so many good things in this story, and so many more good things I did not share either. That is why it is so vital to pick up this book for your very self and continue to read it and explore it in so many ways that you can gain the knowledge and understanding, so that you can come to believe and have faith so that you can go and share with others. Again, I also remind you that there are many different translations and versions of the Bible out there. So, I urge you to go ahead and pick up a Bible that makes sense to you so that you can learn and get rid of the doubt and experience what will continue to best lay the framework and plan for you to have the best “Idear” of how to believe!

Amen.

**References**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

Preaching

Year B 2024

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

(2) Bible.com

(3) Bible.org

https://bible.org/illustration/story-three-trees

(4) SermonCentral.com

The Risen Christ Comes To Us

Contributed by Ronald Harbaugh on Apr 18, 2009

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Denomination: Lutheran

**John 20:19-31**

The story of Easter continues as the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. His

words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the

risen Lord.

19When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the

house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came

and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 20After he said this, he

showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw

the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent

me, so I send you.” 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to

them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven

them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them

when Jesus came. 25So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my

finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

26A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with

them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and

said, “Peace be with you.” 27Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and

see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but

believe.” 28Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29Jesus said to him,

“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have

not seen and yet have come to believe.”

30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not

written in this book. 31But these are written so that you may come to believe that

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have

life in his name.