

Sermon 2010 Easter 5
Text: Rev. 21:1-7
Theme: "I'll Be Back"

Remember Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie

"Terminator?"

"I'll be back." That's how I always think of Jesus when I think of him talking to the disciples about his return in glory on the last day. Think about it. What did the disciples think? What did they think when he said he would rise from the dead? They must have thought he was speaking metaphorically right? Like we say, when someone dies, that they live on in our hearts. We don't mean that they are physically living in our hearts. They must have thought the same thing of Jesus. Sunday was the first day of the week and when the new week comes our Lord will be dead but his teaching and modeling he did for us will live on forever in our hearts and in the hearts of the people we teach.

That is why the disciples were not at the tomb Sunday morning. They didn't really think he would rise from the dead. That's why Mary Magdalene was on her way to the tomb to anoint her lord's dead body. She didn't really think he would rise from

the dead! That is why everyone was so shocked when he appeared to them and they didn't even recognize him partly because he was the last person in the world they expected to see.

Once they finally realized that their Lord was back with them again, imagine the disappointment when he announced that he would be leaving again soon. What did they think when he said he would be returning to his father? Is he going to die again? Is he talking eventually like we will all return to the Father eventually? Nope, one day they were hanging out together on a hill outside the city and up he went into the clouds. What did they think?

And before he left, he said he would be back. What did they think then? I'm sure they didn't get it because even on the day of his ascension into heaven, the disciples asked him if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel today. Jesus knows that these things, death, resurrection, ascension, return in glory; they are all too big for us to wrap our minds around. Oh we can intellectually recite it back in the creeds. We probably can tell a non-Christian what we believe. But to fully comprehend what we

are saying is beyond us on an intellectual level. That's why high school and college can be such dangerous times for Christians. Often our religious assertions are being challenged on every side, but not all of us are equipped to defend those assertions.

It is a hard thing to say "I believe this in the face of facts that seems to dispute what I believe." It takes time for faith to grow to a level that can endure that kind of onslaught and that is why many people fall away from faith in their late teens and early twenties. It is simply too difficult to maintain faith in the face of what seems like hard facts.

Jesus does two things for us. In the Gospel he gives us a pass and tells us that we don't have to get everything RIGHT NOW. Some things are just too hard for us and we can relax because the Holy Spirit is on the job. He will guide us in all truth. That is his full time job. He takes the Word of God and shapes it to fill our needs. Ever notice how sometimes the sermon, or the readings or a hymn addresses the very thing you needed today? That is not accidental. That is the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God and honing it so that it fills the very need you have. Beyond

the Word he washes us clean with Baptismal water and strengthens us with the body and blood of Christ. So relax. All you have to do is be where you receive the Word of God and His Sacraments and the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

That is why it is crucially important that Trinity remains a place friendly and welcoming toward youth. Criticisms and complaining about dirt, noise and money are of no use for building the kingdom. If we want the next generation of Christians to be ready, they have to feel comfortable being in the place where they receive Word and Sacrament. The vast majority of adults who have remained in the Church since childhood can relate multiple stories of people in the Church who made them feel needed, loved and supported. In fact half of our council members at Trinity were born, baptized, and confirmed at Trinity.

The second thing Jesus does is give us a picture of what his return will be like in the Revelation to St. John. We don't get all the specifics, but in a world riddled with cancer, unemployment, gang and domestic violence, the poor, homeless, the hungry; we

can understand a new earth. We need a new earth. We can understand that there are times when the only way to fix something is to throw the old one away and start over. That is exactly where we are with this world.

So our goal is not to fix the world. It cannot be done. We can raise all the money in the world. We teach people to work and send doctors to foreign lands. We help fill the local food pantry and provide meaningful programs for the youth of our community but the world is broken. Our goal is to keep our faith strong while we are in this world and to alleviate whatever suffering we can. Amazingly enough, the Holy Spirit works especially hard on us when we are trying to help others.

That's why I say that the servant events we do are not really for needy people. They are for us. In serving others, God does amazing things to us. Helping needy people is just a nice byproduct. When we make meals for people and tie prayer blankets and teach Sunday School and give faithful offerings and chaperone youth trips and teach music and tell the Jesus stories, the recipients of our work usually benefit, but we receive so much

more. For in our doing all that we do, the Holy Spirit works in us and grows our faith to epic proportions. That is the way God works.

That was why Jesus was not concerned that his disciples did not know enough yet. He knew there would be plenty of time for the Holy Spirit to work on them and build their faith and understanding. So don't be discouraged when you think that you still don't get it. These things of Jesus are beyond our understanding. All we can do is listen to His Word, receive the body and blood of Christ and remember our Baptisms and trust the Holy Spirit to work miracles in our lives. AMEN.