

John 21:1-19  
Acts 9:1-20  
April 10, 2016

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

What we have here today is essentially 4 call stories. However, we also could claim them as 4 stories of commissioning because to be “commissioned” is part of the call. Yes, we are called by the Holy Spirit into Christ’s church through the grace-filled and life-giving waters of Baptism. Yes, we are called into something much bigger than ourselves. We are called into an identity – sons and daughters of God, disciples (i.e., followers) of Christ. But with that call also comes a commissioning. Yes, to be commissioned means to be given a task, a charge, a command and indeed that is exactly what we find the resurrected Christ doing in our lectionary texts this morning. It would seem Jesus’ ministry would be done following his death and resurrection; however, clearly it is not. This Jesus, the world’s Jesus, our Jesus is continually at work. Nothing will deter Him from glorifying His Father. Nothing will slow His mission to redeem all people to Himself. Nothing – not betrayals, nor sleeping disciples, not fear, nor persecution, not even death will hold Him back. This Jesus is alive. Alleluia! Praise be to God! And here today, once again we find the resurrected Christ on the move relentlessly pursuing those whom He loves in order to continue the work of God. Tirelessly seeking out and calling all sheep into the fold and into the fullness of a relationship with Him and His Father.

He is commissioning or perhaps re-commissioning Peter for service. He is charging him to tend to the sheep who belong to Jesus. He is commanding him to follow. And then we find the risen Christ coming to the most unlikely of persons – one who would seem least suitable from a human perspective; however, God’s vision is often vastly different than ours and Jesus calls Saul out of life in which he has been persecuting those early followers of Christ and into those very same waters of baptism we find ourselves before this morning where. And Jesus commissions Saul to be an instrument chosen to bring the name of Jesus before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel proclaiming that Jesus is indeed, “The Son of God.” And, within this story, there is yet another call and commission – that of Ananias. Already a faithful disciple of Jesus; however, a new call comes to him and the Lord commissions him to go to Saul, lay his hands upon him, baptize him, and be the voice of Christ commissioning Saul for service.

So that’s three stories: Peter, Saul (Paul), and Ananias, but where is the fourth? We have to look no further than the front row where we find Lauryn, a precious child who will soon be welcomed into God’s family. Yes, her parents have made the choice to bring her here this morning, to be baptized into the body of Christ, to be forever marked with the cross of Christ; yet, there was more to it than that. Our faith tells us the Spirit of the risen Christ continues to be at work in the world and in the lives of God’s people and we have no doubt the Holy Spirit was leading, guiding, and calling this child into

these waters through the faith instilled in her parents. It was no accident. It was not something done on a whim. No, the Spirit's hand was in this and the promise God makes to Lauryn today is the same promise God makes to all of us in our own baptisms – God's hand will always be upon us even in those moments we don't sense it is there. Even in those moments we retreat into our comfort zones when we fear the risen Christ has departed from us. Perhaps, this is indeed what Peter and those other disciples were doing. Returning to their homes and back into that which they knew – catching fish. Yet, something was amiss wasn't it - for they caught no fish. They may have felt safe back in the confines of that boat where they had spent so much time; however, they were lost. Like Saul, they were blind and needed their eyes opened in order to be the fishers Christ had called and commissioned them to be. And then, the risen Christ came. His hand was upon them. He called out to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" And He shows them the way to the fish they are seeking. He fills their nets to the brim. He feeds them yet again. He gathers them in and restores them into a right relationship with Him – despite their betrayals, their abandonment of Him, and their failure to do as He had equipped them prior to His death. The risen Christ comes yet again and helps them see Him standing on the shore and hear His voice calling out, "Children".

Today, this precious daughter will be called into Christ's church but she will also be commissioned by Her Lord for a life of service. Where the Spirit will lead her and use

her we don't yet fully know – only God knows; however, the promise is made today certain as the fact the sun will rise once again tomorrow that she is forever and always a child of God. The promise is made this morning that nothing in the world can separate her from God. The promise is made this morning she can return time and time again to these grace-filled waters and hear words of forgiveness and love. The promise is made that she will be a vessel of Christ's love and the Spirit will use her to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Life in Christ is a truly a joy. It is amazing. It is awesome, isn't it? All those very same promises God is making to Lauryn this morning hold true for us as well. And it is these very things we need to cling to in our calling and commissioning as children of God. Because, while this is indeed a most precious thing – to be loved unconditionally by the God who created everything, to be forgiven infinitely, and to know our salvation is secure through Christ's death and resurrection – these stories today reveal our call and commissioning will often lead us into stormy seas. Picture a navy ship, if you will. The day it is commissioned is often marked by a joyous festival; however, that ship will most likely find itself at times floating in hostile waters with the threat of danger lurking nearby. Jesus completes His commission of Peter by indicating the martyrdom he endure as a result of following Jesus. He sends Ananias straight into the lion's den with Saul – it is no wonder He questions Jesus about this. And we hear these words from Jesus pertaining to the mission ahead of Saul, "I myself will show him how much he

must suffer for the sake of my name.” Yes, life in Christ is joyous, amazing, and awesome; however, it can also be downright frightening at times. It is in these moments we so desperately need to return to the waters of baptism and hold on tightly to those promises God makes there. It is in the midst of the waves crashing around us when we feel alone, scared, and lost we need to stop and listen for the voice of the risen Christ calling out, “Children, I am here.” He is here. He is calling. He is commissioning. He is alive! Alleluia!