

Pentecost 11, Proper 14  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

August 9, 2015  
Rev. Paul Moore

## **The Final Resolution of All Things**

There's a story about a fisherman lying beside his canoe at noon on a third-world beach. A tourist who is an entrepreneurial type is out for a mid-day power-walk between phone calls. He finds the fisherman relaxing in the sun and asks him why he isn't out fishing.

"I went out at dawn this morning," he replies.

"So where is your catch?"

"I already sold it in the market."

"The market is still open, is it not?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, if you went out this afternoon you might have fish to sell this evening for peoples' supper."

The fisherman thought for a moment. "Then what would I do?"

"Well, you would make more money."

"And then?"

"You could buy another canoe and hire another fisherman."

"And then what would I do?"

"Well, soon you could have a fleet of canoes, and sell them all and buy a big fishing boat."

"And then what would I do?"

"Well, you could make a lot of money..."

"And then?"

“You could sit back and relax.”

The fisherman looked at the tourist long and hard, and seeing that the poor man just didn't get it he replied slowly, “And what do you think I'm doing now?”

Have you ever felt like you're running to beat the band? I know I have, in fact, I feel that way a lot. The demands of ministry are legendary, and without God's grace there is no way any of us round-dog-collared people could do it. So what does it mean to "beat the band?" When I lived in Ecuador sometimes there would be processions through town, religious, political or social, there was usually a band. In the front or rear of the band would always be a number of brass instrument players. Their instruments would be dull and without luster, with obvious dents and patches, but that did not stop them from making a noise to beat all noises. The phrase, “to beat the band,” means to do something so energetically that even that ubiquitous sound would not be heard.

The calling of clergy is by no means unique in its potential for that kind of frenetic business. Our whole culture is geared for the future. Words like “faster,” “more efficient,” “mechanized,” “predictable,” drive our economy. The goal is to finally have time to rest...but...that goal is notoriously elusive. When rest is the last thing you do after work, you rarely rest. And then there's that niggling feeling that crops up just often enough to be bothersome. What if after working so hard to climb the ladder, I find it's leaning against the wrong wall? What, really, is the point of it all? How we yearn for a moment of refreshment, a moment to sit back with a tall glass of something cool and liquid, and for a moment to let the world go along without us, when the pressures of life no longer impinge upon our peace.

Elisha wants that, too. He's been fighting evil in his day like an ancient super-hero. You can hear the despair in his voice when he moans, "I am no better than my ancestors." He's convinced he has made no difference. He thought he would purify Israel and return them to the holiness of the early days, But it seems to be of no avail...he's a failure as a prophet. It leaves him feeling weary to the bone, feeling like his life is not even worth living. He lived 2800 years ago but he could be any one of us who has ever hit the wall in life.

Jesus gives us a rather surprise answer to that situation. The reading this morning outlines John's Eucharistic theology. It's all centered on the person of Jesus as the manifest Word of God, as is the whole book of John. Jesus is the source of life and vitality, abundant living, resurrection and all those things that refresh deeply. Eating him is eternal life. The evangelist is not talking about life after death, that concept is foreign

to his writing. He's talking about here and now.

So what is it that we must "consume" of Christ in order to have the refreshment of the eternal realms? That depends on who Jesus is. Jesus is the one who surrenders to the will of the Father, the one that does the father's will, who does not do anything he doesn't see the Father doing. These are all images from the book of John. He calls us to surrender, to recognize that we are not ultimately charge. The salvation of the universe is not on our shoulders, we have been given a work to do, but not more than that. God is God, and we are not. We must crucify the rule of the ego, that we might live by the Spirit of Jesus.

There is a bigger purpose to life than just making more money so we can have more money, or getting to be important so that we can be important, or even stopping war or ending poverty or catching human traffickers, good though those ends may be. All of these ends can be ego-driven, and ego does not know how to love. Ego does not know how to put limits on our consumption. Ego does not know how to place ourselves in a larger context and community. All of those depend on a deeper, broader and more fundamental goal for human living: Surrender to the unconditional, endless and limitless love of God, and learning to live from that place of surrender.

There is a twist to this that is often lost on us in our post-modern age. This is no individualistic self-realization quest. The surrender we seek is something we do as a community. We are a part of a surrendered and surrendering body. We surrender to one another, and in doing so we surrender to God. We love one another, and in so doing love God. We work for justice and peace with one another—that is, the whole family of Creation itself, and so we work for the Kingdom to which we are surrendered.

Today we lay to rest the cremains of our brother, Richard Rhoades. Dick is in the eternal refreshment of the saints in light. The death of the faithful, in light of the Resurrection of Jesus, has been since the very beginning a sign to the living of that final rest to which we are all called. Dick's presence with us week by week in the Columbarium, along with all the others who are already there, is a living symbol of the fact that death is not a dead-end but a doorway. Those who are in the Saints in Light know the full arrival of the Kingdom for which we toil on our earthly pilgrimage still. In a way, our moments of refreshment here all are foretastes of that which we all seek—the final resolution of all things in the shalom of God, when all is set straight once again and the struggle is over.

So how do we then live? We do not quit the earthly battles in a misguided escapism, nor do we ride out in glory on our white horses to conquer the world. But we do draw our inspiration from those moments in our lives when the true nature of things is made

manifest, when the vision of the Kingdom whose full coming will know no struggle comes clear and the eternal refreshment of God is known even though partially, giving focus, purpose and balance to our living.