

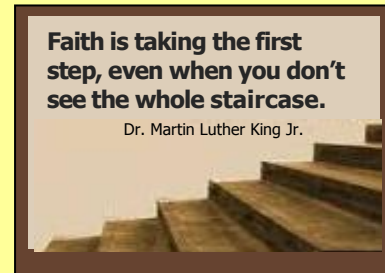
"The Library"

August 16, 2015

John 20:19-31

Barb and I just returned from vacation at the cottage; a wonderful time full of memories.

We added to the library of memories of our grandson Keegan, who spent the better part of a week with us. We have a "lily pad" at the cottage which is basically a 6 feet wide by 14 feet long piece of compressed foam that you can actually sit on and walk on while it is on top of the water. So Barb and I would sit at either end and Keegan, almost three years old now, would run from one end to the other, jumping and splashing right in front of us. I can see the big smile on his face, the twinkle in his eye and I can hear the beautiful laughter coming from deep within him, even now. Yes, it is another story in the book of memories, the library of memories that is within our minds. Beautiful memories.



It is in and through such experiences that we see God.

All of us have memories, stories to tell. And the most memorable ones, the most powerful ones are those that inspire us, make us laugh, or cry - those that touch us deeply. It is in the deep moments of life that we experience God.

I have encouraged you over the summer to think about stories of your own lives. We were inspired the stories told by people within this congregation back in July: Alison's story about being in Peru all alone, waiting for adoption papers and travel passports that would enable her to go home; Diana's story about the baby who never lived in this world; Margaret's story of a simple banana loaf and a grieving widow; Randy's story about family connections, Margaret's story about the feeling of accomplishment after incredible effort and practice; Lisa's story about an everyday casserole and a family in grief. All of these are stories that are part of the library of this church. And these stories need to be told, they need to be remembered. They need to become part of who we are. Why? Because it is in and through such stories that we see God.

It is the same with the grand storybook our of faith - the Bible. The Bible is a library of books and stories that teach us about God. But we need to be careful. The Bible stories can paint all kinds of different images of God, concepts of God - the Biblical stories can be misread, misused and misunderstood. We need to remember that they were written by everyday people, people like you and I, people who were telling stories of how they experienced God.

Rob Bell is helpful here. He teaches that the Bible cannot be limited to just a story about God telling us what to do, what to believe, how to act and what is necessary for salvation. The Bible is not a literal translation of God's words to God's people. No it is a library of books, some history, some poetry, some prose, lots of stories. Rob Bell says this about the Bible: "The fundamental story arc of the bible is God is passionate about rescuing the world, restoring it, renewing it"

As such the Bible and all of its stories are more complex than any simple reading might suggest. This complexity matches the complexity of life itself.

In John's gospel we read about the appearance of Jesus to the disciples in the upper room. Thomas is not ready to accept or believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead. He says "unless I can put my fingers into the holes in his hands, I will not believe". Then suddenly Jesus is standing among them, inviting Thomas to do exactly that. And Thomas saw Jesus and fell to his knees.

When have you seen Jesus? It is only in the telling of our stories that we sense and see and experience Jesus.

John, the gospel writer, ends this passage with the words "Now Jesus did many other things in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you many come to believe (belove) that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing (beloving) you may have life in his name."

John is saying there are many other stories of Jesus. We have some of those stories - and by sharing, remembering and celebrating our stories we grow in our faith and in our love both for God and for each other.

But there are other stories we need to hear as well. We need to listen to the stories of those in our community who are not part of our church. I watched a science fiction movie last night about a woman who sacrificed everything, including her own identity in order for her teenage daughter to have a chance at a future. It reminded me of the many stories there must be of people in this community who have come from homes thousands of miles away to settle here in Canada in order to have a better future for their children. What have been their sacrifices? What are their stories? And how can we hear them?

When we as a church tell our stories, listen to the stories of others, and learn from the library of stories we call the Bible, then God can truly be made known in our midst

Thanks be to God.

Amen