

04/16/23 Sermon for St. Dunstan's by Sue Carroll

Who You Really Are

[Gospel: John 20:19-31]

Aren't you all beautiful this morning!

On this Sunday after Easter.

Did you know this is called “low Sunday”?

Possibly because of the contrast with last week

the high of extra singers & a brass quartet &
packed pews.

But it is also “low Sunday” in terms of attendance.

So you all get extra bonus points just for showing up this morning.

Look around you.

Look at each other

You are so beautiful!

But you are more than beautiful.

Look at these cute flower pictures on the wall.

They are meant to be more than cute.

Have you come to see the risen Jesus?

Would you like to see the risen Jesus?

Tag, you're it!

Let me explain.

In our gospel lesson this morning, the disciples have gathered in a room
and locked the doors,

because they are afraid.

They are afraid that the same people

who persecuted and ultimately crucified Jesus

will come after them as well.

So they are behind locked doors

and Jesus is suddenly

right there.

Standing among them.

He says “Peace be with you.”

a very traditional greeting.

Is he being casual here, using a familiar traditional phrase?

Like : “Yo, whazzup?”

No, this is from the Gospel of John

we know there is MEANING.

“Peace be with you.”

Don't freak out, my friends, just because you saw me die

and now I'm standing here.

Don't be alarmed, just because you locked the doors

and now I'm standing here.

He says it again: “Peace be with you.”

Then he says “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

Patty helped me find the Greek word for “send”

that John used in writing this.

The word is “pempo”

Which, as it turns out, is Greek for

“ Tag, you're it!”

It will be up to the disciples now,

to go out, and serve God's people

listening

hearing people's pain

healing

hearing people's confessions

forgiving

Spreading the love of God

Jesus breathes on them, and asks them to “Receive the Holy Spirit”

Who could blame them for being a little freaked out?

How would you respond

if God spoke to you and said

“YOU!

Go, and love my people”

How would you respond

if the risen Jesus were to appear among us right now

and say

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you”

Tag, you're it!

Well, maybe we can't see him

maybe we feel, like Thomas,
that unless we see him, and touch his wounds
we won't believe...

But folks,

that is at the heart of our faith.

Tag, we're it.

In our Communion service

the Priest says most of the liturgy

but

when it comes to the lines that actually quote Jesus

“Take, eat. This is my Body, which is given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.”

when it comes to these words

They are in **bold type**.

WE say them, all together.

Did you ever wonder why WE say them?

We say those words because now WE ARE JESUS.

Tag, we're it.

In the affirmation of faith,

the one we use from the New Zealand prayer book,

WE say to God

“You empower us to be your gospel in the world:

WE ARE THE GOOD NEWS.”

We are sent.

We are now the body of Christ

We are the hands and feet and hearts

of the risen Jesus.

But wait! We want to say...

No! That can't be right..

I can't be Jesus!

I'm just ... I'm just ME

We are not alone with this reaction;

it is a recurring theme in Bible stories

Moses says to God

“NO! Don't send me

I've never been much of a public speaker

The prophet Jeremiah does the same thing

“I don't know how to speak!”

Jonah runs the other way when God tells him to go to Nineveh

When faced with what feels like a huge demand

like, being God's representatives here on earth

sharing God's love with everybody

We can feel like

“Oh, no, “The real me isn't good enough.”

When the truth is:

ONLY the real you can do it.

Let me tell you a story about a little boy

This is a true story
It happened right in front of me
Many years ago,
I lived in a townhouse community
Not long after we moved in, one Saturday morning
there was a knock on the front door
and I opened it to find this maybe 6-year-old little boy
bright blond hair and a big smile on his face

HI

he said

MY NAME IS COLIN CAMPBELL!

Well, hi Colin! My name is Sue.

HI SUE!! HOW ARE YOU THIS MORNING?

I LIVE RIGHT OVER THERE!

WE'RE NEIGHBORS!

We came to call Colin Campbell "The Mayor"

He knew everyone in the neighborhood.

He came by at least once a week

to check up on his constituency.

He'd knock on the door and call out

HI!!! IT'S COLIN CAMPBELL!!

And just check in to see how we were doing...

At that time, I lived with a cat, Murphy

Murphy was what they had in mind when they coined the term
“Sourpuss”

He was Grumpy Cat before there was a Grumpy Cat
Murphy was sullen, generally unhappy, and very, very
unfriendly.

There were very few humans Murphy would tolerate.
One day when Colin Campbell came by,
he spotted Murphy in the hallway behind me.

“WHO'S THAT?!”

Of course Murphy evaporated up the stairs

I had to explain to Colin Campbell about cats

How they don't really like loud noises.

And Murphy was particularly sensitive, I told him.

Well, Colin was determined

and this was one of his constituents

So Colin Campbell learned to be quiet.

He would come to the door

stage-whisper his name

ITS COLIN CAMPBELL

and sit quietly on the floor.

After a while, Murphy's curiosity brought him out to examine
this little human.

It was amazing!

And after several weeks,

Murphy would come running when Colin announced
in the stage-whisper
IT'S COLIN CAMPBELL

Then came Halloween.

I opened the door
to find a remarkably Colin Campbell-sized Superman on the step
“TRICK OR TREAT”

Hearing the now-familiar stage whisper,
Murphy came running down the hall.

But

then

he saw: Superman!

Murphy froze.

We all sort of stared at each other,
and Murphy started to back away.

Superman dropped to his knees

ripped off his mask,

and wailed:

“It's okay Murphy!

It's not really Superman!

It's only Colin Campbell.”

It's not just “okay” to be who you really are.

In order to convey God's love

it is necessary to be who you really are.

Jesus, when he appeared to them

he was not superman

He was still his wounded, scarred self.

One of my favorite theologians, Nadia Bolz-Weber,

wrote a piece about this last week.

Here is part of it:

Jesus came and stood among his disciples and said peace be with you,

then he didn't try and hide the mark from the spear on his side.

He didn't wear gloves to conceal his scars.

Jesus came and stood among his disciples and said peace be with you

then he showed them his hands and his side.

He knew that he would be known by his wounds.

And isn't that true for us as well?

We can only really know and be known when we show our scars.

I never really feel a connection to someone

until they have shared with me the lumpy,

broken, petty, parts of themselves.

I may be inspired by the virtue and accomplishments of others,

but I only feel less alone when someone shares their failures with me,

the parts of themselves that have been hurt.

We might feel

like the “real us” isn't good enough

to be the living Jesus

We aren't superman.

But the truth is,

in order to serve God's people

listening

hearing people's pain

healing, with compassion

hearing people's confessions

forgiving

Spreading the love of God

We can only do that as our real selves. Who we really are.

Yes, we are now the hands and feet of the risen Jesus, the risen Christ.

It is up to us now.

But we are not asked to be perfect

we don't have to be superman

In fact, it is only as our wounded,

confused,

faulty

messy

REAL selves

that we can love as Jesus loved

and share God's true love with God's people.

Do not doubt, but believe.

And later on in the service,

when we have the passing of the Peace,

instead of saying "Peace be with you"

how about we say

"Tag, you're it!"

AMEN.