

## **“Handful O’ Nobodies”**

Providence United Methodist Church

June 1, 2014

The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of Luke, chapter 24, verses 44 through 53. I’ll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. Father, as Jesus appeared to his disciples in the passage just read, appear to us here today. Make us solemnly aware of your presence and your leading as we glean from your word what you would have us do in our lives this week. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Jesus had been telling the disciples all along that it would happen. Recall a few weeks prior he kept saying to his disciples, that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to

rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

He said it over and over, telling them he would die, but they couldn’t grasp the reality of it. Even after his death, he appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and was trying to convince them by saying: “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. A few hours later he appeared to the disciples again and He said to them: ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

Jesus didn’t stop there. He further emphasized that everything that had happened to Him, his suffering, death, and resurrection had not only actually happened and that He was the Messiah, but it had been foretold for centuries by the prophets. Which brings us to today’s scripture: Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day. How did Jesus have so much patience to deal with this group of people who had such a hard time believing that Jesus was the Son of God? Why did it take so long for the disciples to get what Jesus was trying to tell to them? It was because they were human. They had their own ideas about what the truth was.

They had their own way of doing things. They felt, they could help out God with their own ideas and ways of doing things. It sounds just like me. It sounds like a lot of people I know. In fact it just sounds like people. They weren't educated as Rabbis, nor did they have superior intellect as the Greeks did. They didn't have power and authority like the Roman government did.

In fact when it comes right down to it, they were a simple group of fishermen, tax collectors and tradesmen of sorts. By rights they were just a Handful O' Nobodies. Ordinary people who found themselves in the presence of God. A Handful O' Nobodies just like me, and just like you, who weren't sure how to act in God's presence. Who weren't sure about what the scriptures were saying even though Jesus kept repeating it to them many times over and over. They didn't realize that Jesus had to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins was to be proclaimed in his name.

This has weight. It's the last thing Jesus was communicating to those he was closest to before going back to Heaven. I'm so glad that no matter how stubborn I am, no matter how down about my life I get sometimes, no matter how much I think I have the right answers, no matter how I can't understand what scripture is saying to me... that Jesus doesn't give up on me. He keeps coming to me; he keeps encouraging me, he keeps telling me there is a plan for my life having to do with spreading the good news.

The good news of Christ; what is that anyway? It's the Great Commission! It's about reaching people for Christ. It's about listening to people and listening to people and listening to people. In fact, it's listening to them so much, when you get ready to talk—they're gonna *wanna* listen *to you*! Jesus was a relationship guy. He was the kind of guy that got personal with people. He connected. He established relationships. He cared about people. He fed them. He met *their needs* first. He did

things they liked to do...like fish. Like taking walks through gardens. He met people at wells and had conversations with them.

This is what our dinner tonight is all about. It's Providence's new agenda. It's meeting people where they're at. It's going to the places you like to go to and striking up relationships with people over a period of time. Then when you feel comfortable with them and they with you...you say something like this. "Hey, wanna come to a card game I have at my house this Monday?" Or maybe this, "Hey, I wonder, since you have a dog, would you like to walk our dogs together?" Or maybe this, "Hey, how about having a cup of coffee together every Friday evening with me? I need a friend."

We find a nitch and a slot to minister to people that like to do certain things. We talk to them about what they need in their life. We're intentional about finding what ministers to them. We pray about them. We pray about the relationship. Fact is this. We all have good news to share. Over time, with the people we talk to, God will show them they matter to us *and* to God. We're planting seeds. People matter to God. This is why we want to reach new people. We extend ourselves. We get out of our comfort zone, and through our conversations we meet people.

First we build bridges, and then we build relationships. It's a process. It can't be done overnight. We look for things in common we might have with others, and then we include and invite them to come along with us. Fact is this. We're all just a handful o nobodies unless we're on God's side and reach out to connect with others relationally. This is what we're talking about tonight at the potluck at 5:00. Please come. Find out what it's all about. We need your help! Bring a side dish, and let's all get on the same page together as we reach out. Let's pray. God, you are a relational God. You reached out for us, and you connected with us. Help us to do the same. We pray for the whole church to get involved in this God. Lay your

hand over each and every person sitting here this morning. Let's work together to be a blessing in our community. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.