

# Third Sunday of Easter 10 April 2016

## Jesus Appears to Us and Asks Us to Care For His People

[Acts 9:1-6, \(7-20\)](#); [Psalm 30](#); [Revelation 5:6-14](#) [John 21:1-19](#)

Jesus is Risen!

Did you notice, are you aware, he is risen, if you did then celebrate it in your heart and in your life. Ok it was a long time ago, but we do remember, celebrate and each day of our lives we can rejoice in the living spirit of the risen Lord.

Many did not notice or even believe, I work with people who, on the most part did not notice or know why is great to celebrate new life. Many don't like the Easter message and so it is hard to share the vibrance of the Easter story.

The Easter season is a great time if you live into it.

We can pick up the excitement through stories and through God's spirit, being in you and me. We have just heard the story of Saul who becomes Paul. It tells us of Jesus appearing to him in a great light.

Saul hated the followers of Jesus....

**We know Saul was of strictly Jewish parentage, and was born, a few years after Jesus Christ, in the commercial and literary Greek city of Tarsus, and there also inherited the rights of a Roman citizen. This gave him three great nationalities of the ancient world, and was endowed with all the natural qualifications for a universal apostleship.**

**He received a good Jewish education at Jerusalem in the school of Rabbi, Gamaliel, in religion and philosophy,**

**Paul was the only scholar among the apostles. \*\*\* He never displays his learning, considering it of no account as compared with the knowledge of Christ,**

**While Peter and John had natural genius, they had no academic education; Paul had both, and became the founder and greatest contributor of Christian theology and philosophy.-Phillip Schaff**

What a change - there was a renewing of Paul mission moving from a Jewish understanding to the new Christian one, some scholar's argue that it was not a conversion but redirection.

That he was just misguided before.... passionate but misguided.

A great story where Jesus revelled himself to Paul and then Paul was sent into the hospitality of a Christian home, that of Ananias who looked after him even though Ananias feared Saul and his reputation.

Then we move to the Gospel and another great story of Peter a few days or so after Jesus first appeared to the disciples but did not stay.

As the story unfolds, Peter is with some of the other disciples, possibly a couple of days since they had seen Jesus and not knowing what to do. Peter decides to do, what he is good at, he said, I'm going fishing!

Following his leadership, they all went fishing.

And Jesus meets them on the beach although they are out in the boat but not far out and they had caught nothing all night, Jesus suggests to them, to try something different, try on the other side. Then they catch more than enough.

Peter keeping it real again, when he realised that it was Jesus, puts some clothes on because he was naked and heads in to meet with Jesus again.

Then Jesus suggests, 'Come and have breakfast'. Not only confirming that he has physically risen being able to eat food but Jesus continues to build community.

Then Jesus reinstates Peter, if you remember Peter denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion.

Simon son of John do you love me more than these? Yes Lord: you know that I love you.

Not only is Jesus reinforcing God's desire for all of us to care for our neighbour but allows Peter the opportunity to right himself after denying Jesus three times.

I would like to read a story to you, if you have heard it before please just enjoy it again. - The Rabbi's Gift

One of the best things in life is the experience of loving relationships in a Christian Community.

I would suggest three steps;

- 1/ Step back from community to review/ reflect any times we have denied God as Peter did and confess that to God.
- 2/ Step back in to Community knowing God loves and forgives us.
- 3/ Then love others equally and accept love from others.

# The Rabbi's Gift

The Different Drum version  
by Dr. M. Scott Peck\*

The story concerns a monastery that had fallen upon hard times.

Once a great order, as a result of waves of antimonastic persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of secularism in the nineteenth, all its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age.

Clearly it was a dying order.

In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage.

Through their many years of prayer and contemplation the old monks had become a bit psychic, so they could always sense when the rabbi was in his hermitage.

"The rabbi is in the woods, the rabbi is in the woods again " they would whisper to each other.

As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to the abbot at one such time to visit the hermitage and ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town.

Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things.

The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. "It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years," the abbot said, "but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here.

Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?"

"No, I am sorry," the rabbi responded. "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, "Well what did the rabbi say?" "He couldn't help," the abbot answered. "We just wept and read the Torah together.

The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving --it was something cryptic-- was that the Messiah is one of us. I don't know what he meant."

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi's words.

The Messiah is one of us? Could he possibly have meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot?

Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation.

On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light.

Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred.

But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah.

Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me. I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah.

And on the off off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then to go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate.

As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed the aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place.

There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more

frequently to picnic, to play, to pray.

They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought their friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks.

After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another.

So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant centre of light and spirituality in the realm.

Richard Whereat