



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

416 Crescent Avenue, Ellwood City, PA 16117

Phone: (724) 758-6278 Website: www.firstumcec.org

Rev. Patricia Cleary

Pastor's Page –April 2015 Moving On

“Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” - Jn 21:15 TEV

Following Jesus' resurrection some relationships needed to be mended. The two we know about are Thomas's and Peter's.

What strikes me about each of the stories (both in John's gospel) is Jesus' willingness to take the initiative. To Thomas he showed the evidence that helped him overcome his doubt. Jesus put the disciples on notice, however, that the life of faith is just that--a life on based on belief rather than sight, on trusting despite a lack of empirical evidence. We, too, are blessed when we believe even though we don't see. To insist on hard evidence is a stumbling block in a relationship with the Lord. We all have a little Thomas in us but thankfully Jesus keeps working with us to keep us connected to him.

It was more complicated with Peter. He had denied knowing Jesus at a critical moment when Jesus needed his support, but when standing up for Jesus had seemed too risky.

Once again, Jesus took the initiative to repair the relationship. He didn't bring up the past. He didn't demand an apology. He prepares the disciples--Peter included--breakfast. Then he took Peter aside and asked him whether he, Peter, loved Jesus more than the other disciples did.

How could Peter answer? Given his public denial of the Lord, Peter was hardly in a position to pass judgment on the level of his fellow disciples' devotion to the Lord. All he was in a position to do was to know his own heart. What was the condition of Peter's heart? I imagine Peter was in great pain. I imagine he wished for all the world he had spoken differently, done differently. I imagine he was sure Jesus would not want anything to do with him.

But that wasn't true. Jesus wanted Peter to love him. And I imagine Peter did more than before because Jesus had reached out to him despite what he did.

“Peter, do you love me? ...Take care of my sheep.” Jesus' love for Peter included giving him a task to do. To have reestablished their relationship but leave Peter without a part to play in the future would have left Peter wondering if he was really back in Jesus' good graces.

Jesus loved Peter. Jesus forgave Peter. Jesus had faith in Peter. Jesus wanted Peter in his Kingdom. Jesus was ready to move on. Once Peter had the opportunity to confess his love for Jesus, he was ready to move on, too.

It's inevitable in this life that relationships get damaged. In Christ, relationships can be restored. God's Kingdom is always on the move, growing and changing with each new day. Our call is to connect with Jesus, to confess our love and to answer his call. We don't need to get hung up by doubt or regret.

Let's move on.

Pastor Pat



DON'T TELL ME FRIDAY THE 13TH IS UNLUCKY. LAST MONTH ON FRIDAY THE 13TH I CAUGHT A MOUSE! MY PEOPLE HAD PUT OUT TRAPS TO TRY TO CATCH IT BUT THEY DIDN'T WORK. I WAS THE ONE WHO GOT IT. AND TO MAKE SURE MY PERSON KNEW IT, I LEFT IT FOR HER TO FIND ON THE STEPS OUTSIDE HER BEDROOM.

- GEORGE, THE PARSONAGE CAT

