**The Reverend Heinz D. Raidel**

**Message Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**May 15, 2022**

**Prayer:** Lord may the words we speak and hear, and the thoughts in our hearts, be pleasing to you, Amen.

**Start: The boss wondered why one of his most valued employees was absent, but had not phoned in.**

Needing to have an urgent work problem resolved, he dialed the employee's home phone number and was greeted by a child's whisper, "Hello."

"Is your Mummy home?" he asked.

 "Yes," whispered the small voice.

 "May I talk with her?"

 The child whispered, "No."

 Surprised and wanting to talk with an adult, the boss asked, "Is your Daddy there?"

 "Yes."

"May I talk with him?"

 Again the small voice whispered, "No."

 Hoping there was someone with whom he could leave a message, the boss asked, "Is anyone else there?"

 "Yes," whispered the child, "a policeman."

 Wondering what a cop would be doing at his employee's home, the boss asked, "May I speak with the policeman?"

 "No, he's busy," whispered the child.

 "Busy doing what?"

 "Talking to the ambulance men and the Fireman," came the whispered answer.

 Growing more worried as he heard a loud noise through the earpiece on the phone, the boss asked, "What is that noise?"

 "A helicopter," answered the whispering voice.

 "What is going on there?" demanded the boss, now truly apprehensive.

 Again, whispering, the child answered, "The search team just landed a helicopter."

 Alarmed, confused, and a little frustrated, the boss asked, "What are they searching for?”

Still whispering, the young voice replied with a muffled giggle..."Me!

 **TRANSITION**: Yes, I may have used that before, yes it was intentional, and yes I wanted to key on the word “searching” and the people who search “searchers”

Because, if there is a word to describe all of us as Christ followers, that would be “searchers”

-it seems the people who follow Jesus have always been searching for something

-scripture gives us examples of people through time who are searching

-scripture details some of the trouble or challenges those searchers ran in to

- scripture also describes the good news of Jesus that those searchers ultimately found

 -Regardless of where we are in our faith journeys, we too are searchers

-we are searching for what we hope and believe Jesus promises

-or we might be searching for a way of life

-we might be searching for a faith boost or something like that

-we share some of the challenges and troubles that Christ followers have experienced in their searching

-and the good news for us today is that we also share the good news that searchers through the ages have found or been blessed with

-and the good news for today is that the good news we search for will strengthen our faith and make this world better

**I would like to start our “search” today** with what we just read in Acts.

-now, granted, the big picture in that reading is definitely in how Peter explains Jesus brings salvation to all

 -salvation to Jews and non-Jews/Gentiles

 -that's good news for us, no question

 -but for today there is another point in this reading from Acts: specifically, the non-Jews in the room at Caesarea - the brothers and family Peter had been called to speak with?

-Today those non-Jews/Gentiles show what searching provides:

 -they were searching themselves

 -and through the spirit, through their determination, hope

-they found something in Jesus and his promises that moved their hearts and changed them

 -they were part of as growing community of Gentiles

-who learned of Jesus, believed, and became Christ followers

-and their community had grown to the point where their numbers threatened the Romans

-consider: The Jewish leaders had problems with their own who followed Jesus, sure

-but for the Romans, Jews and Jews who followed Jesus were pretty much the same group

-it was when numbers of people outside the Jewish community and faith began to “join up” as Christ followers that Rome was alarmed and the persecutions began

-and, obviously, again, Peter’s message to those searchers who were Gentiles was that regardless of what happened, God’s promise was the same:  they had found the messiah,

-and salvation was exactly the same for them as believers as it was for the Jewish believers.

**I think it's important for us** to understand that the Jews (even or especially the most faithful of the bunch) had been doing some searching of their own

 -for some time

-they had been searching and hoping and praying for the Messiah for a long time

 -and they faced some challenges

 -they faced some doubt, uncertainty,

-they faced temptations to try and draw them away from their faith

 -they became impatient at times

-and they had a few false prophets along the way who muddied the waters

-and regardless of what these and other challenges were, they were searching for a Messiah who was real, present, and on the way

-during Advent, the build up to Christmas, I stressed it was important

 for us to understand from a scriptural standpoint

-that the birth of the Messiah just not appear out of nowhere

 -Jesus was described,

 -foretold

 - promised in the scripture from God through the prophets

 -and it happened

 -also, during Lent, the build up to Easter we read and learned

 -the crucifixion scenario did not appear out of nowhere

 -rather Jesus’ death and resurrection was described in scripture

 -foretold

 -promised

-and it happened.

-so the faithful Jews, the searching Jews, and the searching Jews in that room in Caesarea with Peter found or learned or were reassured of the fact of Jesus as God’s promise and blessing of life eternal for everyone of all the nations

 -as it had been promised

 -as it had been foretold

 -as it had been described in scripture

**Now then… in this room, here and now**, I am going to dare say that we are all searchers.

 -some of us are searching for reassurance of our own salvation

-if we are honest there are more of us searching for reassurance of the salvation of friends, family, and loved ones we care about

 -some of us are searching for a reassurance that only comes from being in community with other Christ followers

-some of us search for the faith boost that comes from being around others who have decided to follow Jesus

 -and some of us are searching for answers as to the Messiah’s return

 -and our search runs up against the same

 -questions

 -uncertainties

 - temptations trying that try draw us away

-and challenges as the Christ followers in the room at Caesarea with Peter did.

**The good news:**

  -just as the birth of Jesus was God’s plan and shown through

 scripture (promised, foretold, delivered)

-and just as the death and resurrection and salvation through Jesus was shown through scripture, (promised, foretold, delivered)

 -the glorious and welcome return of Jesus is foretold, promised, and will be delivered in the scripture we read today in Revelation

 -our search for what happens ends here with a promise:

 -we are promised that God will make his home with us

-we are promised that we are and will be God’s people, all of us

-we are promised that evil and all things which hurt and do not build us up will just be no more

 -no more death, no more mourning, no more crying

 -no more Covid, no more broken washing machines

 -no more plugged up well pumps

 -no more dead car batteries

 -okay, I had to see if you were still with me, okay…

-point is, there is a great day coming, nothing to fear, everything to rejoice

-in the same way as Jesus’ birth, life ministry, death, resurrection was promised through scripture,

 so also promised is to each and every one of us who believes (or maybe even tries to believe) is the World and Kingdom of God.

-so when we need a faith boost, well, consider God is 100% so far at keeping promises and saving us.  God has this.

**Amen, Come Lord Jesus.   Word.**