



Iowa IPL Earth Words Sermon Contest Runner-Up

“You Goin’ Fishing’?”

By Reverend Mark Pries

Zion Lutheran Church – Iowa City, IA

Presented Sunday, April 18th, 2010

Psalm 104:1, 13-23 (opening litany); John 21:1-19; Acts 9:1-10; 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-29

The forces in nature are huge

Seismic plates moved again – this time in China

Didn’t predict it; couldn’t stop it – gotta live with it

For the families of the 200 people who died it is very real

A volcano erupts in Iceland

Didn’t predict it; couldn’t stop it – gotta live with it

For international travelers volcanic ash is very real.

Especially with implications for the people of Poland today

An asteroid explodes over Wisconsin – came near to Iowa

Didn’t predict it; couldn’t stop it – gotta live with it

So easy for us to forget; yet so important for us to remember

We are one of the creatures on spaceship earth

Understandably the question might come,

You want to escape? We’d like to say Yes

That man named Saul, a persecutor of Christians,

When he was on his way to Damascus with arrest warrants for some Christians,

the radiance of Jesus confronted him – light of the world lights up the world

Saul cried out, “**Who are you?**” (Acts 9:5a)

Underneath his question: “What’s going on? What’s happening?”

He couldn’t tell – he’d been blinded by the light of Christ

Later scales fell from his eyes ~ he would see clearly his *new* mission

This coming Thursday is the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day

There on the balustrade behind me are samples of God’s gifts to us on this Earth

2 jars of air, 2 jars of water, and 2 jars of soil

Precious gifts that sustain us

There are children today who would be so happy (relieved) to have these gifts

Clean air to breathe, water to drink, soil that could produce food

Like most of the essential gifts God has given us,

when we have them in abundance, we forget how precious they are

In 1970 people didn't just say, "Hey, let's have Earth Day"

Awareness of what was happening to the Earth was of increasing concern

In 1962 Rachel Carson published a little book, *Silent Spring*

In it she documented the dangers of DDT to bird populations

The environment was also competing against industry, jobs, and the economy

People were recognizing industrial and urban waste was going unchecked

State and local regulations were inconsistent and weren't being enforced

In 1970 President Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency in the US

The federal legislation united many local efforts to protect the environment

Earth Day and the EPA – *prima facie* ~ obvious and necessary

Rallying the people; empowering the government of/for/by the people

About the same time the World Council of Churches responded to 4 critical realities:

The prospect of nuclear war / rapid population growth

deepening poverty / and growing environmental degradation

In 1979 the World Council named four essentials for all that lives on planet earth

SUSTAINABILITY: Enough for now and enough for tomorrow

SUFFICIENCY: Enough for all creatures and creation

As Paul described to Timothy in this morning's reading, **there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment** (1 Tim. 6:6)

PARTICIPATION: Every person & creature has a voice in decisions affecting them

If they cannot speak, as in the case of other species or future generations, then we will need to represent their interests

SOLIDARITY: Simply recognizing that we are all in this together

Powerful & powerless, rich & poor, humans with the rest of nature

Already in 1984 the World Council of Churches recognized climate change as a "sign of peril" and a "test of faith"

The study named "luxury emissions of the rich" & "survival emissions of the poor"

The study showed that environmental problems reveal that nature has become a victim right along with the poor

People have been concerned about the environment for way more than 40 years

In the 1880s Vincent Van Gogh's landscapes often included signs of pollution

A wheat field with a dozen Paris smokestacks belching in the distance

Snow stained with green-black soot covering a tree trunk

Letters to his Brother Theo name his concern

What he was seeing, smelling, tasting: dangerous and deadly

Wallace Stegner, "The Dean of Western Writers" was born in Lake Mills, Iowa in 1909

He studied at The Writers Workshop here at the University of Iowa

Stegner loved the West

ached over what was happening to it during the end of the previous century

He served on the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club

In his limited edition book, *A Sense of Place*, he wrote

"I don't know what I like; but I like what I know" (repeat)

This sounds so comfortable ~ so smart

Looking over a western landscape ~ snow capped mountains in the distance

Free range cattle crossing a swollen stream

Sitting on his porch

"I don't know what I like; but I like what I know"

We understand just what he means

When all the life around is in SOLIDARITY and PARTICIPATING together in a SUSTAINABLE and SUFFICIENT way,
good to say something just like that:

"I don't know what I like; but I like what I know"

This man Saul who would become Paul once thought like that

But he was confused ~ arresting Jewish-Christians had become all that he knew

"I don't know what I like; but I like what I know"

It rhymes with *status quo*

But wait ~

Because Jesus Christ is arisen from the dead, *status quo* has been defeated

Jesus has defeated death

Everything will be new: new heaven, new earth, New Jerusalem

The old has passed away ~ the new has come

Consider Simon, son of John, who is also before us this morning

When Simon met Jesus (John 1:42), Jesus renamed him: he'd never be the same

Jesus called him *Cephas* (Latin)

or more commonly *Peter* (Greek) – we say *Rocky*

Immediately there is no *status quo* for Simon, son of John

His name changes ~ his vocation changes

He's not a career fisherman anymore ~ he's a disciple

The leading disciple ~ big brother for them all

According to John, after Jesus arose, he appeared to Peter twice behind locked doors

Always with a greeting of peace –

as if to say: *"not to worry; it's true; death can no longer hold us"*

we've got even more good news to tell

FORGIVENESS OF SINS; LIFE AND SALVATION –

Our lives will never be the same

Then comes this reading before us today

Peter is with Thomas, the sons of Zebedee (James & John), and 2 other disciples

(maybe Philip and Nathaniel who were mentioned in chapter 1)

All these guys were career fishermen

They all left fishing to follow Jesus

Lived with him; learned from him; had been sent out to tell others about Jesus

And Peter says, **"I'm going fishing"** (John 21:3a)

The others don't object – "You Goin' Fishin'?" – **"We will go with you"** (21:3b)

Stegner's little wisdom is being *twisted*

"I don't know what I like; but I like what I know" ~ "I'm goin' fishin'" is *status quo*

Jesus is the non-anxious presence on the beach

"Children, you have no fish, have you?" (21:5a) – the boat was riding high

Not to worry, the carpenter's son has bread and fish ready to eat

(our lack ends with God's abundance)

It's breakfast time in a new day - they had lived in the darkness long enough

Give them some protein and carbs and set them off on their mission

Evangelize the whole world

Let us not be so excited about the resurrection that it be said of us

that we are so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good

Heaven is secure – the creation is fragile and vulnerable

Everything that was threatening 40 years ago, still is

War, poverty, climate change, and over population

The world's population is 6.8 billion; in 50 years it is projected to be 9 billion

SUSTAINABILITY, SUFFICIENCY, PARTICIPATION, SOLIDARITY will still be important

Some are already naming FOOD SECURITY as the new threat to life on this planet

Seems we've been waiting for someone to tell us what to do

Jim Martin Schramm, professor at Luther College, brings this exhortation

"We must not let the perfect be the enemy of the good"

Let's not wait – let's each of us live in the newness of the resurrection faith

We know what to do – our little steps/action together become the giants steps that bring about change

These days are now new days to live SUSTAINABLY and SUFFICIENTLY

"You Goin' Fishin'?" ~ maybe in a couple weeks ~ only for a little while