



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

Sunday May 13, 2007

Easter 6 ----- Fishing

When my children Rachel and James were very little we talked about fishing and they got real excited. So we went to Wal-Mart and got a couple of junior fishing kits. And I promised them that we would go fishing. So that weekend I kept my promise and we went fishing. Both Rachel and James caught some fish and then we had to decide if we were going to keep the fish or not. Of course Rachel wondered if they could be a pet and James said, "Let's eat them." But we had to make a decision whether or not to keep the fish.

In one outing the word keep had different meanings for us. The first meaning was to keep my promise and the second meaning was to keep the fish. The first meaning had to do with a commitment that was made and the second had to do with a possession.

In our gospel today Jesus uses the word keep and I believe it has a lot to do with commitment and not possession. You see, keep is a commitment word.

We keep a promise. We keep our word. We keep making our mortgage payments and payments on the car. In the marriage service I ask the couple, "Will you keep each other in sickness and in health and forsaking all others be faithful to each other as long as you both shall live?"

The word keep is a pretty important word in our faith too.

Jesus hinges discipleship on it. Those who love me keep my words. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.

It was not a do the best you can thing, or try to keep it as much a possible. It's keep it or forget it. And to keep it means commitment.

But you know commitment can be so dull. A commitment is always made in the mood but long after the mood has gone the commitment still remains. And this is so true of our faith.

When Jesus told the parable of the sower and the soil that was about commitment.

When Jesus was faced by the rich young ruler who so proudly told Jesus he kept all the commandments and wanted to follow Jesus and Jesus said, "Sell your possessions and then come," it was not about his possessions. It was challenging the man to see where his commitment was.

What Jesus wants of us is commitment to him and commitment to his teaching and a commitment to a way of life that shows others we are committed.

There is a wonderful question and I've used it many times; "If you were accused of being a Christian would

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there be enough evidence to convict you?" If you were accused of being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Think of how many excuses we use for not practicing our Christianity. How many excuses we make for not worshipping.

How many excuses we make for not praying. For not living our life as Christ would have us live it. For not being committed.

We come up with all kinds of excuses, don't we, and then, just when we think we've heard them all we get surprised.

When I think of commitment I think about the commitment of sports fans. Sports fans are committed. It doesn't matter how the team does they are committed.

But I never hear out of the mouths of sports fans that they are never going back because:

.....Every time I went they asked for money.

.....The people I sat next too were not very friendly.

.....the seats were too hard.

.....I went to lots of games but the coach never came to see me.

.....The referees made decisions I could not agree with.

.....The game went into overtime and I was late getting to the restaurant.

.....The organist played numbers Id never heard before and it was not my kind of music.

.....It seems the games are scheduled when I want to do other things.

.....I suspect I was sitting next to some hypocrites. They came to see their friends and talked during the whole game.

.....I was taken to too many games by my parents when I was growing up.

Fans make a commitment to follow a team and attend games and talk about the team and wear the paraphernalia and be very outward in their love of the team.

It is a commitment regardless of the hardships or inconveniences, because they love the game. And they love to be there.

Does not Jesus ask the same kind of commitment from his disciples? Does not Jesus ask of us the same, if not deeper, love for him?

If anyone loves me they will keep my words and I will come to them and make a home with them. What sort of spiritual home do you have? To what and to whom are you really committed? Amen.

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