**“Who Do People Say the Son of Man Is?”**

**I have another story to share with all of you this morning. It’s about a journey into the Light. By now many, many years ago when I was twenty-eight, I found myself saying to God, “ I belong to you. I turn myself over to you.” I didn’t say this out loud; I was alone, and I gave this declaration from a deep place inside of me. Then slowly and at first imperceptivity; my life began to change. We found our family moving to Northern California. New friends, different experiences, as my love deepened for our Lord.**

**I did some silly things along the way of becoming a priest. We all do silly things in our lives, after all we’re just fallible humans. So was Peter a fallible human just like us. Yet sometimes anyone of us can have moments of clarity reaching toward the magnificent truth of God. For short periods of time, we can see the Light. Those that are able to understand the beauty and wonder of God, even for a little while sometimes become saints.**

**Peter is a good example for the rest of us. He was very human, just as much as all of us are very human. After Peter betrayed Jesus three times, he realized what he had done and felt terrible. Even after his terrible mistake he remained the rock Jesus would build his church upon. Every one of us often does less than serving God in our lives. When I was slowly, very slowly moving toward priesthood, I just ignored the nudges and feelings of what I was to do with the rest of my life. I kept running away from anything even hinting of priesthood. The hints and nudges I was getting would go away for a while. Then they would come back, and I would pretend not to notice those times of gentle nudges. Yet somehow as I grew older, the idea of becoming a priest blossomed in me and I could no longer ignored them. I wish I had listened to those gentle nudges years before I was ordained a priest. It means a great deal to me to serve God in this way. Yet God never gives up on any of us, and helps us grow into what we are to become in many different ways. Especially when we attempt to follow him, even just some of the time. He’s always available to all of us when we ask for his guidance.**

**We all have moments when we are capable of seeing clearly the Light and love of God and realize the best that we can be is to follow him. Moments when everything seems to be all right in the world and the Light of God shines through no matter what is happening around us. Years ago for a brief moment I understood the beauty of God. Then that moment passed and I found myself falling into the rhythm of everyday life. I lost the clear moment when I understood the deep and abiding love of God. Peter experienced a huge and wonderful moment in time, and he was able to break through his human foibles and understand who Jesus really is, the son of the living God.**

**In that moment of absolute clarity when Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the son of man is?” Peter answered him and said, “You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.” Can any of us imagine such a wondrous moment, when Peter was the only disciple knowing who Jesus was, while the other disciples had no idea? They didn’t know who Jesus is when he asked, “… who do you say that I am.” Only Peter answered Jesus and said these extraordinary words, “You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.”**

**I wonder what the other disciples thougt when Peter said those amazing words. Did they believe what Peter said, or were they shocked? They might have believed as some other people of their time did that Jesus could be John the Baptist, or Elijah or simply one of the many prophets. We will never know because Jesus then said to Peter, “Blessed are you ….for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades will not prevail against it.” Can any of us even contemplate being told by Jesus he was going to make us the foundation of his church? Perhaps Peter didn’t quite take in all of what Jesus has said to him. We can only guess at Peter’s reaction, and still I will always wonder, if Peter understood fully what Jesus said to him. It just might be too much for any human to completely comprehend.**

**In this time of unrest and pandemic, we can be assured darkness will never overcome the love of God, or his church because Jesus told Peter, the gates of Hades will not prevail against his church. Jesus’s words help me this morning and I hope they also help you. All that we are experiencing as the pandemic goes on will never destroy the church of Jesus Christ our Lord. We can also be assured our mistakes and foibles will always be forgiven; all we need do is sincerely ask our Lord’s forgiveness. There is great hope in the love of God for his people; we can rest in it and remember we are loved.**

**This morning I have a few more thoughts to share. During this time of pandemic, the worst job market since the great depression, many people losing their homes and jobs. There is one gift we can always depend on, the boundless love of our Lord for his people. We can also remember the church is not just brick and mortar; each one of us represents the church in the places where we live and work. How we live our everyday lives can make a difference to those around us.**

**Jesus said the gates of Hades will not prevail against his church. We each represent his church and no matter how frail our country can seem to any of us right now, Hades can never overcome the hope and love Jesus offers all of us. This kind of love is everlasting and can never be destroyed by anyone or anything. Have faith, and hope and keep on representing the church in our little part of the world, and darkness will never prevail. Amen**