

“Conversion?”
4-10-16
Jonathan Bratt Carle

Prayer

- 1. Two stories of conversion: Paul and Thomas – big moments.**
 - a. What if we never have a big moment? Jesus’ word of grace: “Blessed are those who believe and have not seen.”
 - b. Jesus implies that he’s not going appear out of no where to show everyone his wounds. Jesus implies that there are other means of grace.
- 2. “We have seen the Lord.” – What makes this believable?**
 - a. What kind of witness is this that leads to conversion?
 - b. convert (verb) circa 1300 AD, from Old French *convertir*, from Vulgar Latin **convertire*, from Latin *convertere* "turn around, transform," from *com-* "together" + *vertere* "to turn". (<http://etymonline.com> – search “convert”)
 - c. The message “We have seen the Lord” doesn’t carry any weight, if the church doesn’t live out the ethics implied the vindication of the way Jesus lived his life.
- 3. Points for Review in Eastertide:**
 - a. The resurrection of Jesus is a **vindication** of his way of being in the world.
 - b. His way of being in the world is based on his **living of the commandments** in the Hebrew covenant: love Yahweh, love one’s self as Yahweh’s creature, love the neighbor, the stranger and the enemy as Yahweh’s creatures.
 - c. The Good News about Life from the Dead in Jesus is not believable unless it is accompanied by the demonstration of the love of Jesus.
 - d. Conversion means --- “To turn together from our own way of being in the world and imitate Jesus, inspired by the Spirit of Life.
- 4. New ideas:**
 - a. Conversion is not an intellectual event: the Body of Christ isn’t selling ideas.
 - b. If our mission is for the all people to put their trust in Jesus (to have “faith” in Jesus), the Body of Christ must demonstrate the trust *of* Jesus.
- 5. How will the world come to belief if they have not seen?**
 - a. Paul’s blindness: Jesus doesn’t appear to Paul a second time in this story. Instead, Jesus sends Ananias. When Paul’s sight is restored, Paul sees the reality of Jesus made visible in the love and selflessness of Ananias. The witness and acceptance and care of the Body of Christ confirms for Paul that the person he met in his vision is real.
 - b. Paul is converted as much by the mercy of Jesus and Ananias as by their message.
 - c. Paul and Ananias turn together, and begin to live lives of proclamation.
 - d. But what makes their message credible – they go arm in arm.
 - e. Their new community is the proof that Jesus is alive.
 - f. It is in their walking along together that say to their Jewish brothers and sisters see the proof of their testimony: Jesus is the Son of God; he is alive; and we have seen him.