

**April 3, 2016
Acts 5:12-42
Pastor Elizabeth Kelsey
Creekside COB**

“If It Is of God”

Ever wonder about the origin of dogs and cats? It seems they were created to bring certain key virtues into our lives! True or not, the following story is attributed to the Dead Sea Scrolls:

And Adam said, "Lord, when I was in the garden, you walked with me every day. Now I do not see you anymore. I am lonesome here, and it is difficult for me to remember how much you love me." And God said, "No problem! I will create a companion for you that will be with you forever and who will be a reflection of my love for you, so that you will know I love you, even when you cannot see me. Regardless of how selfish and childish and unlovable you may be, this new companion will accept you as you are and will love you as I do, in spite of yourself."

And God created a new animal to be a companion for Adam. And it was a good animal. And God was pleased. And the new animal was pleased to be with Adam and he wagged his tail.

And Adam said, "But Lord, I have already named all the animals in the kingdom and all the good names are taken." And God said, "No problem! Because I have created this new animal to be a reflection of my love for you, his name will be a reflection of my own name, and you will call him DOG."

And Dog lived with Adam and was a companion to him and loved him. And Adam was comforted. And God was pleased. And Dog was content and wagged his tail.

After a while, it came to pass that Adam's guardian angel came to the Lord and said, "Lord, Adam has become filled with pride. He struts

and preens like a peacock and he believes he is worthy of adoration. Dog has indeed taught him that he is loved, but no one has taught him humility."

And the Lord said, "No problem! I will create for him a companion who will be with him forever and who will see him as he is. The companion will remind him of his limitations, so he will know that he is not worthy of adoration."

And God created CAT to be a companion to Adam. And Cat would not obey Adam.

And when Adam gazed into Cat's eyes, he was reminded that he was not the supreme being. And Adam learned humility.

And God was pleased. And Adam was greatly improved. And Cat did not care one way or the other.

I told that just because it is Holy Humor Sunday, not because it fits the text! But the text offers its own humor. There is conflict between the disciples and the religious leaders. After being told not to preach about Jesus, the apostles were found in the Temple again. So the Chief Priest put them in the town jail while the High Council decided what to do with them. The angel of God, however, led them out past the guards and told them to "Go to the Temple and take your stand."

The next day the apostles were back in the Temple preaching. (Reminds me of that Whack-a-Mole game. You think you put them down, and they pop up again.) The Temple police took them to the High Council, but handled them gently for fear the people would cause a riot. The High Priest said, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in Jesus' name, and you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching!" Peter said, "We must obey God, not you. You killed Jesus, but God raised Jesus from the dead! And we are witnesses of these things."

Now the Chief Priest was furious and wanted to kill them on the spot. But Gamaliel, a highly respected teacher of God's Law, said "Be careful! We have seen other leaders like these rise up, and when persecuted, their followers mushroomed. Let's go easy. If these are

just more would-be leaders, the movement will peter out. But if this is from God, we'd better not be fighting against it."

So the disciples were flogged, warned and released. Peterson says, "The apostles went out of the High Council overjoyed because they had been given the honor of being dishonored on account of the name!" Peter and his friends went back in the Temple and in homes preaching about the resurrected Christ. Oh, the power of resurrection joy!

It is curious, isn't it, that the Temple police were "afraid of the people?" The High Council would probably have arrested and killed the apostles, except for the potential power of the people." If this were a just a story about an ignorant fisherman telling his tales about a carpenter's son who claimed to be the Messiah and was found guilty of treason and crucified—the Sanhedrin wouldn't have cared. They did care, however, that the number of people listening to this "fish-tale" about a risen Lord, was growing by leaps and bounds each day. "They knew that a word spoken possesses no power in and by itself; but a word spoken by God and heard by his people—a people who are filled with the Holy Spirit—can change the whole world. And it did!"

Karl Hoefler adds, "What potential power that we, the people, possess when the Holy Spirit works in us and through us. God knows this. This is why every story of the Bible is without question grounded on the call of God to his people and their response. God continually calls his people to be faithful, not just in great deeds of courage and daring, but in the little day-by-day acts of faithful living that, when added all together, can create a mighty movement of faith."¹

JOKE

There was a lady who on the Saturday afternoon before was doing some baking for her Easter dinner the next day. There was a knock at the door. She went to find a man, dressed in shabby clothes, and looking for some odd jobs. He asked her if there was anything he could do. She said, "Can you paint?"

¹ Karl Hoefler, "The Symphony of God," from *Mysterious Joy*, Cokesbury, 1988.

"Yes," he said. "I'm a rather good painter."

"Well," she said, "there are two gallons of green paint there and a brush, and there's a porch out back that needs to be painted. Please do a good job. I'll pay you what the job is worth."

He said, "That's great. I will be done quickly."

She went back to her baking and did not think much more about it until there was a knock at the door. She went, and it was obvious he had been painting for he had it on his clothes. She asked, "Did you finish the job?"

He said, "Yes."

She said, "Did you do a GOOD job?"

He said, "Yes. But lady, there's one thing I would like to point out to you. That is not a Porsche back there. That is a Mercedes."