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**Saints of God  
The Rev. Deacon Lisa Kirby  
April 10, 2016**

*Disclaimer: This is what I wrote to preach for Easter 3. In the end, I discarded it and simply summarized it and talked about it. I have no record of what I said so I can't reproduce it for you here.*

In Acts and in the Gospel today we have two very significant bits of scripture.

Our Acts reading describes Paul's conversion in on the Road to Damascus—Saul/Paul, in one writer's words "still breathing threats and murder against the followers of the Lord, becomes one of Christ's most eloquent spokesmen"--the one who brings Christianity to us the Gentiles.

In our Gospel with Jesus' third and final post resurrection appearance to the disciples, Peter, who denied Jesus 3 times is asked three times "do you love me? Writer Justin Shelley says "Jesus feeds a broken Peter and commissions him to respond by extending Jesus sustenance to others:" Tend my Sheep. Feed my sheep.

I think my overall response to both of these stories is that it is here that we see the broken and estranged becoming leaders in what Bishop Curry calls the "Jesus Movement"

The people who are called to carry out Christ's mission are not the brave and pure knights in shining armor, the two people who are called in our lessons today are broken, even despicable in Paul's case; but Jesus heals them, transforms them, commissions them to be his face and his voice on earth.

Ultimately both Peter and Paul were martyred for their faith.

I don't know about you, but no one has asked me to give up my life for my faith. We have modern examples of those who did, however---Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Oscar Romero, Constance and the martyrs of Memphis, Jonathan Daniels, the Dorchester Chaplains...

But I AM asked to commit my life to my faith.

We are called, as the disciples were, "to tend and to feed His sheep". We are called as Peter and Paul were to be the face, voice and hands of Christ in community.

[The Rev Justin Cox says of our Gospel story today: "Is this really Jesus last appearance? Look with eyes of faith and we begin to see Jesus in the oddest places: on the seashore, in the garden, on the street corner. Sometimes Jesus is hungry and cold and asking us for help, and other times he is inviting us to share in a meal. But always, always Jesus is challenging us to live lives of kindness and compassion, of sharing and generosity, of justice-making and peace.]

Our brokenness is no hindrance and in fact it can be a help. Were it not for my alcoholism, my experiences with abuse, abandonment, loss, death, I would probably not be a deacon today. Those experiences of brokenness were ultimately tools to prepare me to attempt to

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**help others. I truly believe that God needed to me to go through everything I went through so that I could be of service to Him, so that I could hear my call to the diaconate.**

**None of us escapes this life unbroken. Yet God sustains us and calls us to be about HIS work. We are not perfect. God loves us anyway---not just in spite of our brokenness but because of it.**

**God heals what is broken in us and uses it to tend his lost sheep, to feed his sheep both literally and figuratively. Not all of us will be called to be clergy, Stephen Ministers or to the Order of St. Luke, , but I'm trying to figure out some way of signing up, or sharing that information with the clergy, that we would be willing to talk with people who are facing what we have already faced---physical like knee or hip replaced, cancer and chemo to the loss of a child or spouse. Sometimes we just don't know whom to ask.**

**[A friend of mine said once---no matter what happens in life there is always an opportunity to learn to love to serve or to grow and it's our job to figure out which it is or if it's all of the above. Some of my worst disasters became, in the end, my greatest blessings.]**

**There is, you know, a bit of Peter and a bit of Paul in all of us but learning from them, may we remain open to see and hear Jesus. May we take some time to reframe our past hurts and seeming deficits so that they become assets, that we may show God's healing to all who suffer, as we strive become his face, his hands and his voice in community, tending, comforting and feeding His sheep.**

**Amen**