

Living Books

The Second Sunday of Easter. Year B, RCL. John 20:19-31. April 8, 2018. The Episcopal Shared Ministry of Our Saviour, Salem and Trinity, Alliance. The Rev'd Jerome H. (Kip) Colegrove.

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31)

“But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” (John 21:25)

What I just read is the famous sentence that concludes the Gospel according to John. And you'll recognize the two sentences I read just before it as the conclusion of today's Gospel reading. They go together, because they speak of the limit that has to be placed on what the Bible can tell us about what God wants us to be up to. And the limit is not really one of physical volume—how many books the world can hold—but rather it is a limit based on how we are called to spend our time.

Just think for a minute: if we had all those books about Jesus, we'd be spending all our time immersed in history—holy history, yes; but we need to be making holy history of our own. The Bible is a library of books that we do need to study and discuss—but the rubber hits the road when we get out there and apply the faith we've been

hearing and reading about, doing things that would be worthy of their own recordation as examples of living in the spirit of Christ.

The Bible's witness to what God is up to is limited, circumscribed, because we need to become "doers of the word, and not hearers [or readers] only." (James 1:22) Coming to believe in Jesus means behaving as he behaved, connecting belief with thinking and thinking with doing. There comes a point at which our practice of the Christian faith becomes the text that converts others. Or, to put it a bit differently, Jesus is still acting, still showing himself present in holy power, when we act in his spirit, in his name, in his way and toward his purposes—and this activity adds to the "signs" of Jesus' reality and presence in the world—*our* world, *God's* world, the world God has never hung out to dry and never will.

That is why what we do as Christians is important from a faith-development point of view. Giving hungry people food is good; letting people see how and why Christians feed hungry people is good in two additional ways: it bears witness to God's love and active presence in the world and it helps reinforce, extend, and develop our own faith and practice. And this is also why not every single thing Jesus did had to be written down. The life and work of Christians as individuals and as groups—throughout the ages—is an ongoing witness to what Jesus does for the life of the world and it is a continuing invitation to join in. It never ends, and it won't till Jesus returns in glory.

We fill those books that fill the world. That is our calling and our empowerment in the Risen Christ.