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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Sunday closest to August 24 |
| Year A Proper 16 RCL |

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| ***Track 1*** |  |  |
| Exodus 1:8-2:10 Psalm 124 Romans 12:1-8 Matthew 16:13-20 |  |  |

**The Collect**

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

There are ordinary, believe-able stories and there are extra-ordinary stories and stuff that stretches the imagination (in other words, the unbelievable stuff).

This Old Testament story is one of my personal favorites. Many of you may know that even one of my dogs is named Shiphrah, because doesn’t everyone name a dog after a midwife in the Old Testament? When I explained the story to a technician at the vet’s office once, she insightfully pointed out that in fact this girl dog of mine lives up to her name as being one who likes to ignore commands. In Moses’ birth story, the midwives Shiphrah and Puah practice civil disobedience, perhaps the first recorded in history, at least in the Bible, in their defiance of Pharoah’s command to kill the Hebrew baby boys. The remainder of the story, the story of how Moses came to be, is accomplished by the action of the mothers of Moses- his biological Hebrew mother and his adopted Egyptian mother, who by scheming, with the help of an older sister, embed Moses in Pharoah’s house. This story is true folk-lore, but folk-lore which is based on the ordinary care of a mother to ensure the life of her child. These actions testify to the extraordinary presence of God living among us, but yet in an ordinary tale of midwivery and motherly care—the divine extraordinary within the human ordinary….

Although Christ was a man, it is, of course, the incarnate deity that makes Jesus entirely extra-ordinary. Anything to do with Christ being in the world is extra-ordinary. Christ present from before time as Word— extra-ordinary. Even his incarnation, yes man, and yes God— extra-ordinary. And of course there is nothing ordinary about the resurrection. And in today’s Gospel, long before the extra-ordinary resurrection, Peter puts into words an answer to Jesus’ question , “But who do you say that I am?” and gives voice that he recognizes the divine, that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” The ordinary Peter is looking on the extra-ordinary Christ and sees Jesus for who he is.

Although God can surely act in our very ordinary world, even if we are not inclined to put our babies in a basket in a river, the question that we are left to answer is “are we able to recognize the extraordinariness of Christ?” We are no different than Peter. Each of us is a person, just like Peter. Just like Peter, each of us has had some encounter with Jesus or we would not be in this building. Now what that encounter has been, and where each of us is on our faith journeys is very much an individual story, but the question each of us must answer, and the answer may change with time, but the question remains “who do you say that I am?”

How do we recognize the extra-ordinary? How do we come to the same answer as Peter? “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Sometimes we may feel we don’t deserve this Messiah, sometimes it feels too good to be true, sometimes we don’t trust as real what on some level what we may believe is true. I am sure some if not all of you know…sometimes the faith journey to that answer is harder than at other times.

Which leads us to the in-between spaces- between ordinary and extra-ordinary… We are not all on our own when it comes to believing and proclaiming who Jesus is. There are no hoops to jump through. God calls you into relationship with God. You only consent to that relationship, consent to being healed with love. The revelation of God acting in the world, in both the ordinary and the extraordinary, is accomplished by God. Flesh and blood does not reveal who Jesus is to you. You may come to church for the first time or every time because some one else invites or invited you, and you may stay for many reasons, but just like for Peter, who Jesus is… that is revealed to you by God alone. That revelation itself is a bit extraordinary.

Yet, when you do assent to who Jesus is and you do proclaim to others, then you also consent to being Christ in the world. You become a little bit extra-ordinary. You, like Jesus, become “a living sacrifice” in the words of Paul. You are grafted into being part of the Living God. God is able to transform and renew your mind so that you can do the will of God. God’s actions did not stop occurring in the world when people decided which books would be in the Bible and the Bible was canonically closed. God’s hands are still busy in the world today. Busy in you. You become a little bit extra-ordinary.

We together are Christ in the world—-one body with many members, none more important than another. Each of us has gifts by grace to be God’s work in the world, in the ordinary, stretching into the extra-ordinary as we proclaim and allow grace to transform us. Regardless of where we are on the faith journey, when we show up to be Christ in the world, grace happens.

Teresa of Avila elaborates on the words of Paul in this quote of hers:

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours,

no hands but yours,

no feet but yours,

Yours are the eyes through which to look out

Christ's compassion to the world

Yours are the feet with which he is to go about

doing good;

Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.”

When we recognize Christ as the Messiah, the son of the Living God we dwell through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, and we go into the world changed by grace to be extraordinary, sharing God’s love.