

SERMON

29 APRIL 2018

ACTS 8: 26 – 40

1 JOHN 4: 7 – 21

JOHN 15: 1 – 8

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I am hard of hearing.

I am very hard of hearing. Years ago I was diagnosed by an audiologist, Vangey Marshall. She was a member of Christ Church.

She told me that I have 45 caliber hearing loss, resulting from firing a pistol when I was on active duty and said that I could probably remember a specific time when I was deaf. It was after firing at Fort Bragg. I was quite deaf for an hour.

Vangey knew that I was right handed and just how I had held a pistol and that was why my left ear was more involved than the right. Actually, years ago, the Army's ear protection consisted of little pieces of foam rubber to place in your ears.

Apparently Vangey had seen lots of retired military. She gave me a pair of very basic hearing aids, I believe they were called "Bluebirds" to try.

At that time I was driving my old silver Volvo, a car of historic value. Wearing my new "Bluebirds" I got in, started the engine and heard noises I had never heard before. There were squeaks and rattles and a sort of low, humming sound. It was frightening.

At that moment I realized that I absolutely needed hearing aids and probably a new car.

I would like to be able to say that the hearing aids I wear now have corrected the hearing loss but of course they haven't completely. They are wonderful in relatively quiet situations when talking with one or two people. They are

wonderful when the tone of certain voices is just right. But in a crowd, or when it's loud, they fail me and I have found a way to compensate.

Over the years I have learned how to look attentive and seriously interested, even if I have no idea what people are saying. A smile and occasional nod are usually enough to give the impression that I hear what's being said. I hope it's not too obvious. Of course, now that you know, it will be. I do worry that I will smile at something tragic.

When I really don't know what is being said I ask questions.

Actually, that isn't new for me. I went to seminary after retiring from the service and found myself in the world of people when had spent years in some capacity in the church. They had a new language to me. I suppose that was when attention and interest covered complete confusion and bewilderment.

Perhaps you've noticed that there are some unique words used in church, word that really need some explanation; Premillennial Dispensationalism comes to mind

Which brings me to the word "abide." We read it, we say it, we sing it. Have you ever wondered what it means?

Where did it come from? It comes from the translation of a Greek word that was made by the writers of the King James Bible. The Greek word is "Meno." We have the word in our readings because we use the New Revised Standard Version but, if we used the Revised English Bible the word would be "dwell;" if we used the New American Bible or the New Jerusalem Bible the word would be "remain."

If you go back to that Greek word you will find a series of definitions, all of which seem to mean "await," or "stay," but if you go to a dictionary you find it means something entirely different.

In non-church talk "abide" means either to "conform", to "act in accordance with a rule, a decision or recommendation," or "to be unable to tolerate someone or something;" I cannot abide him or her. When Jesus tells His Disciples "Abide in me as I abide in you" the words "Dwell" or "Remain: suddenly make sense. "Unable to tolerate" not so much.

There is however yet another translation of the Greek word. It is "Be resolute."

‘Be resolute in your faith in Me and I will be resolute in my support of you’” has quite a different meaning as Jesus speaks to His Disciples. He is calling on them to take courage, the courage of their convictions in the face of hatred and persecution. Jesus is assuring them that He will always be there to support them. Jesus won’t just remain or dwell or abide with them, He will be there to give them courage and strength to meet the world of disbelief in the time to come.

The world in which they will proclaim the Gospel is a pagan world of many cultures and religions, in comparison with which the conflict with Pharisees and Saducees will pale. That will be the world in which the Disciples will have to survive; the world in which they will tell of Jesus.

That is not so very different from our world today, the world in which you and I are called to speak of Jesus. Jesus tells us, as He told His Disciples, “Be resolute.”

In His Holy Name.