



## “Resurrection Impact: Be a Name Changer”

Third Sunday of Easter  
8:15 & 11:00 am, Sunday, April 10, 2016  
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Acts 9:1-20; Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Danny Trejo grew up a child drug addict and it didn't take very long for him to become involved in criminal activity. He was in and out of jail for 11 years, and then in Los Angeles, on the streets, he was noticed by a talent scout from Hollywood. The talent scout asked him, “Hey do you think you could play a convict?” Danny said he could give it a “shot.” Now he is a Hollywood actor who plays tattooed, tough guy characters.

Shawn Carter was a drug dealer in Brooklyn's Marcy Projects. At some point he decided to turn his stories into music and became a rapper and a businessman. Today Shawn is known as Jay-Z, a respected businessman, part owner of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets, and a record label executive. Oh by the way, he's also Mr. Beyoncé.

Many of you might remember Charles Colson who was at the pinnacle of the political heights, a special assistant to the president. And then because of his hand in Watergate he was sent to prison for a year and one-half. As soon as he got out of prison, because of a conversion experience he had, he created The Prison Fellowship that ministered to prisoners and their families. Instead of giving his life to politics he gave his life to Jesus.

Saul was a Hebrew and a Pharisee, one who observed the law strictly. He studied under Gamaliel. He was one who understood very clearly God's law and was willing to enforce it to the letter of the law. He grew up in Tarsus a Roman colony and therefore was a Roman citizen. He understood Greco Roman society. He was worldly and articulate and because of a conversion experience later he became a Christian and contributed to two-thirds of our New Testament with his writings. Saul was on the road to Damascus and there he met the Lord, well you might say the Lord met him, knocked him right off of his horse. This whole encounter was planned by God, he was going to use Saul for something great, he just needed to get Saul's attention. As Saul is wondering who is talking to him blinded by this great light, a question is asked of him, “Saul why do you persecute me?” Saul probably could have said that he wasn't persecuting Jesus himself, just Jesus' followers. But after the resurrection Jesus has such a connection with his followers that they are one body in Christ. And so Saul persecuting Jesus' followers is persecuting the Lord himself. But it is in that conversion experience that everything is changed. Saul is changed to the very core, that's what God does. God is in charge, in charge of this encounter, and he will use us regardless of us.

The story in the Book of Acts are compelling stories. The story of Jesus is a compelling story and Paul in this moment needs his own Calvary moment. Saul needs to die so that something can be born in him. Saul needs to die so that Paul can live, for in only a few chapters Saul's name will be changed to Paul. He will go through a name change and as a disciple of Jesus Christ he will completely change the character of the church in his ministry to the Gentiles... Greeks and Romans like him.

First he goes through a time of blindness. That blindness mirrors Jesus' death, three days, no sight, no food, and then miraculously, resurrection. You see God often works through sinful people like you and like me. Whereas Martin Luther used to like to say, "We are both "simul justus et peccator," We are both saints and sinners, all of us.

Saul of Tarsus began his journey to become Paul the Apostle on that road to Damascus. He was going there to persecute Christians and instead he ends up becoming a champion for Christ. And all of this is God's doing. He is changed, he has moved from being confident and self-reliant to becoming dependent and a servant. He will take his passion for God to God's people, and God will be with Paul the rest of his life.

Brothers and sisters none of us has to be the people we think we're destined to be. God enacts in us. God infuses his presence in us. God intercedes on our behalf, breathes on us the Holy Spirit to make of us a holy people. We can be what God intends for us to be. He loves us, cares for us, and as you can see from our gospel reading tells us also to care and to love and to do the same. Jesus on the shore of Tiberias shows Peter how to love, this one who had betrayed him, who had walked away from him, three times he denied the Lord and three times Jesus offers redemption by a simple question, "Do you love me?" Peter is shown that he is to tend and feed God's sheep and show his love for Jesus in that way.

Christianity after all is known as "The Way," an interesting manner of talking about the church. Which **way** do you want to go? Jesus invites us all in the path of the discipleship. A path of love and care for others and God will take us places we never thought we could ever go before, and he will give us, each one of us, the power to become the people we were meant to be. God can transform and reform us that way. Our very name is changed; we take on the name of Christ. We are now called "Christian" after all.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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