II Kings 2:9-12, John 6:35-40

“The Resurrection”

 Okay, so before we start to get into any of the Scriptures and get to teaching, I’m going to give you all a quiz on what you learned last week. Ready, Colossians 3:17 – “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” I hope this Scripture has shaped this past week for you.

 If it has then you were probably ready to come here this morning and worship the Lord in a way that you know and love and that you are used to. Well, many of you may have been surprised and potentially even not very pleased with what you found this morning when you sat in your pew. What is going on? Who took over my church? Well, first I want you to meet the worship committee: Charlie, Peter, John, Lorraine, Leo, Karen, Holly, and me. A few months ago the committee which was then approved by the session expressed a deep desire for all of our worship elements to come together in a blended worship so that together, as one family, we can celebrate God’s presence. It was decided that every month that has a fifth Sunday we would celebrate together in a blended worship at both services.

 Now, be rest assured that as Presbyterians we believe that the central, even the most important element of the service is what? Not the music, not the prayers, not even the sacraments, but rather the sermon which Calvin calls thee Word of God spoken. I promise you that this will never, ever change. But I recognize that this morning may have been a bit of a surprise for you, and that with blended nobody is happy, but it is an attempt to offer up to our Savior all that we possibly can.

 This morning, our dramathing, how about our youth, led by Patty Hunt, gave us our first Scripture where we find that Elisha was surprised by Elijah’s being lifted up to heaven, then today in John 6 we see Jesus speaking about the resurrection and what we actually believe about the resurrection. We believe that Jesus’ presence in our lives dictates the presence of the resurrection in our lives now and in the life to come. Jesus’ goal has always been, as our Scripture will reflect, that all who believe in him will be raised up.

 **READ**

I was up pretty late Monday night and ended up going to be very unsatisfied. I don’t know if you were following the controversy these past weeks with the substitute referees and how they were absolutely lambasted week in and week out over these past three weeks until it all finally culminated with a game changing bad call on Monday. The announcers were livid and for the rest of the week called the situation tragic. Tragic…really?

 Jen Fagan in ICU for this entire week has been tragic. The slew of deaths in our congregation over these past few months has been tragic. The 6th anniversary of the Nickel Mines slaying on Tuesday, now that is tragic and continues to be a tragedy that many in this area deal with. Then, as if that wasn’t enough, the reentry of the normal referees by the NFL was labeled as the football being resurrected from the grave by these brave yeomen. Now, you all know that I love sports and it really I a big part of my life and part of my philosophy of life to work hard and to play hard, but when we are talking about the resurrection, well, we have to speak about it in the proper perspective. That’s our topic today, the resurrection and its significance in our lives. Just know that what we are addressing today has temporal and eternal meaning which can be juxtaposed with our earthly concerns and desires that can seem a bit petty.

 Okay, in our first Scripture we saw Elijah being carted off in a chariot and in a whirlwind. It is a bit of an Old Testament take on the resurrection where a loved one is taken from us unexpectedly. Most of the time in the Old Testament a person would have eternal life in the fact that they had sons who would carry on their name and their legacy. The concept of the resurrection and eternal life is not fleshed out except one place in Daniel, so not really carried out until the New Testament. It is not a common concept in the Old Testament, so this is a bit of a take on it by Elijah and Elisha and the dramathing.

 When Elijah is taken Elisha is promised that he will receive a double portion of his Spirit. But even that promise is not enough to assuage the grief of Elisha as he sees his friend and his mentor taken away. It was so grievous to him that he tears his clothes as prophets were want to do. This is a great Scripture for us as we can maintain and be confident of the hope of the resurrection, while also allowing ourselves the ability to grieve.

 Jesus addresses the resurrection in our Scriptures for today. If there is one Scripture that can be seen as our focus Scripture for today it would be vs. 40 here in chapter 6. You know, if you are somebody who likes to bring your Bible with you to church, and if you aren’t you should, then every Sunday you should hear me say something like I just did. The key verse for today, and when I do then you should underline it and put today’s date next to it and over time you will have a pretty interesting and helpful road map for your faith every time you open your Bible. Just a thought.

 Okay, back to verse 40 where Jesus says very clearly that all who see and believe will have eternal life. And this is not news to us. We know that eternal life is reserved for us and that our resurrection is promised.

 But we get a warning in vs. 36 from Jesus to not take for granted all that is wrapped up in the concept of the resurrection and how important it is to unwrap that concept so that it is of benefit for us here and now and not just as a reward in the future. In vs. 36 Jesus reminds us that our track record in remembering the benefits of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not great. In vs. 36 he tells the people gathered around him, you know, those who witnessed and followed him because of what they witnessed, the healing of the man by the pool, those same people who were fed along with the rest of the 5,000, those same people who saw Jesus walk on the water. He tells them you’ve seen me do all of these things, you’ve followed me from place to place to place, you’ve seen it, and you still don’t belive?

 How many of you made it to the fair over the weekend? I absolutely love the fair, I had a chance to serve ice cream and it was a great experience. I got to meet all sorts of different people who have all sorts of different perspectives. One woman came up to me and just started complaining about the noise, the crowd, the dirt, the prices, the people, the confusion and went on and on. So I asked innocently, is this your first year? She looked at me like I was crazy and said: No, I’ve come for the past 26 years. Somehow she was able to forget all of the negatives that she had just relayed to me and focus on what she enjoyed about coming to the fair. Just like a mother who holds her newborn always has a smile on her face as if she has forgotten all of the pain that preceded that birth.

 If we look at Scripture we see repeated over and over again moments in history when people of God have experienced the very direct love of God, the physical presence of God and have then just as quickly forgotten it. As they were walking through the wilderness the people of Israel forget that God liberated them from slavery. In the book of Judges the people are given godly leaders to watch over and care for them and God reveals Himself powerfully to them, but then they do what is evil in the sight of God. The same thing is happening here with Jesus and the crowd, they have seen Jesus and yet they did not believe.

 We are also in the same boat, aren’t we? We could easily forget the enthusiasm that we are feeling now as a solid, loving, church family, we could overlook the joy that we are experiencing as we gather together on Sunday mornings and throughout the week. We could forget the new and good initiatives that are popping up and drawing more and more people to a loving relationship with Jesus.

 We could leave today and focus on how much we didn’t like the blended worship, how the coffee shop is changing the church that we know and love and feel ownership over, we could complain about how too many things are happening at once and it could all fall down like a house of cards. But I know you and I know your lives and I know how Jesus has revealed himself to you. You’ve seen him answer real prayers. You’ve felt his loving arms around you. You’ve literally heard his voice speaking calmly to you, but very directly. I don’t have to use neat sermon examples of how Jesus has revealed himself to me in my life, because your lives and what you have shared is enough experience of the loving God to last a lifetime.

 When Jesus speaks about eternal life and experiencing the resurrection he speaks in the present, as if eternal life begins now, as if the reality of the resurrection is so palpable that we can speak of it in the same terms as we speak of God’s presence in our life now. Vs. 40 tells us that Jesus’ desire for all of us is that all who believe in him will have eternal life.

 What does eternal life look like? Jesus gives us a hint even here in these verses, back at the very beginning of them in vs. 35 when he states that whoever is with Jesus will never be hungry and never thirsty. It is about the same thing that he says to the woman at the well in John 4:14, whoever drinks from me will never be thirsty. The resurrection is marked by eternal life where all of our needs are met, physical, emotional, spiritual. There is no more weeping and crying and Jesus will be the one to wipe our tears.

 The resurrection is marked by an eternali life where there is no illness, which means no medication. There is no worry about you finances. There are no addictions that may be plaguing you and your family or your children or your spouse. There are no perversities in your life. There is no cancer that strikes you.

 But at the center of all of this is belief. And belief in the resurrection is impossible without a close personal relationship with Jesus where we are constantly reminded of his faithfulness and love that are part of our daily life and will be a part of the life to come.

 Jesus here in John 6 is ultimately referring to a reality which, when once possessed, makes a person see natural hunger, thirst, and death as insignificant. The resurrection allows us to believe that here and now, in the present. I wonder what that would be like, to be able to live without that fear and concern obsessing us. I can only imagine, at least now, I can only imagine.