



Easter Sunday Community Service
Rev. Jonathan Stepp
April 21, 2019
Matthew 28:1-10

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

I am reminded this Easter Sunday morning of a friend from my teenage years: Frank Akamea, of the city of Accra in the West African nation of Ghana. Frank and I met the summer that I was 15 when I had the opportunity to go to summer camp in Scotland – there were kids there from all over Europe, Africa, and North America, and Frank fit in well with our dorm even though his English was a little bit rough.

The thing about Frank was that he had no idea how to walk at what we Westerners considered a normal pace. Every time we went hiking Frank would be way out ahead of the whole dorm – not just 10 or 15 feet, but a hundred or hundred and fifty yards, way up at the top of the next hill or the next bend in the trail. Finally, our counselor hit upon an idea to help slow Frank down a little bit. He started taking backpacks from younger boys – some of the 13 and 14 year-olds who were struggling – and handing them off to Frank. I kid you not, Frank was carrying five backpacks before he finally slowed down enough to stay within sight of the rest of us as we climbed 3,200 feet to the top of Ben Lomond.

Why am I remembering Frank this morning? Because in our Gospel text for this service Jesus says “my brothers and sisters, I am going ahead of you into Galilee.” In my mind’s eye this morning, Jesus looks a lot like Frank Akamea – powerful, swift, and way out ahead of us. I can almost see Jesus looking back at us from other side of all that we fear: the other side of people rejecting us, the other side of suffering and pain, and the other side of death. I can almost see Jesus looking back at all of us from the place of resurrection and calling us to come and follow him towards Galilee.

As these 50 days of Easter begin we might plan to meditate in the weeks ahead about where Galilee is for each of us. What is that place in our lives that we know we need to go and maybe we don’t want to go. Or maybe there’s a place in our lives that we want to go but we’ve putting it off, waiting around for circumstances to change or for some sign from the heavens to send us on our way.

Well, here's our sign. Jesus is raised from the dead and he is going on ahead of us into Galilee. Whatever is in your backpack that is weighing you down, holding you back, and draining your energy, let Jesus carry it for you. He's a little bit like Frank – or Frank's a little bit like Jesus – he can carry our burdens and still go on ahead of us. Ahead of us into Galilee, ahead of us into fear and death, and ahead of us into the life of the world to come.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.