**3 Easter, April 19, 2015; Acts 3:12-19; Ps 4; 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36b-48; Rev Mary Trainor**

A song that goes through my mind often goes like this:

Behold what manner of love The Father has given unto us,
Behold what manner of love The Father has given unto us,
That we should be called the children of God,
That we should be called the children of God.

You have these words on a bookmark in your pews this morning. This song is based upon the 2nd reading we heard this morning from the first letter of John: "***See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are***." When one first hears this verse, and one is an adult, one does not think this is in reference to oneself; it's for kids, right? Well yes, but it is for adults too - it is for everyone! We are all God's children -- and "***that is what we are***." This last part, "***that is what we are***," gives us this new identity as God's children with certainty-- there is no ambiguity here, there is no question whether this is true or not; it is the truth we need to live into: Period.

This past week, I was at a presentation by a professional bird photographer -- and a little guy, who obviously loved the study of birds, was in the front row. At one point he had a question for the speaker -- would you believe that he had his hand up for about 10 minutes before the speaker acknowledged him and answered his question! It was like he was invisible, because of his age. Being treated like we are invisible is not fun. In our culture, our age defines a lot about us and also defines how much attention and respect we get sometimes. We are all so used to being aware of how old we are; age defines when we can get our drivers license, when we can vote, drink, sign up for Medicare, and so on. Yet, does this 1st John reading today tell us that what age we are is important to God? No. We are all ***children of God; and that is what we are.***" So, we are to put on God's glasses -- see ourselves, as well as others, through God's eyes, and those eyes are not discriminatory in terms of age or anything else -- we all count, we all are important people of value to God.

In today's Gospel, the risen Christ appeared before the disciples who were startled and terrified. And Jesus responded, "***Why are you frightened.....Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see.***" And then He ate a piece of fish....showing how he was not a ghost. We have a God who was born into a hard working family, who heals the sick and ate with sinners, who considered no one an outcast, who died that we might have life, and who defeated death - and proved it by coming back, showing His resurrected-self to over 500 people. Martin Luther said "**our physical death is like a little death**;" the bigger death to new life happened at the font, and the resurrection is evidence of this new life for all of us. When the disciples registered that this was really true, their lives were transformed. Thomas, John, and Peter were among them. Thomas said in awe: "***My Lord, and my God***." John, lived the rest of his long life sharing God's love with others. Peter, who denied Jesus three times, spent the next 30 years as a great leader of the church, a rock upon which others could learn about faith in Jesus Christ. And, our lives are transformed too, when we recognize the resurrection as a true part of our identity. This transformation began at our Baptism, and continues as we LIVE INTO our Baptism - like the disciples did that day, like we have the opportunity to do today. Jesus altered us, through the resurrection. We are ***children of God; and that is what we are.***" By virtue of being God's children, we have a parent who loves us more than any human parent could, who raises us up with more caring than any human parent could. And, we are heirs of God's kingdom: the will is completed and we inherit what is God's, we are headed to eternal life.

Why do I sing this song to myself? Why should you learn it and sing it to yourself? Sing it to remind yourself how much you are loved by God; how much God expects of you; how God takes you back, regardless; how you do not have to go it alone, because God is always with you. So, let's sing it together now. And, children I have instruments for you to use as we all sing it. Claim this awesome identity, living into the resurrection. We are all ***children of God; and that is what we are.***"