RECOGNIZING WHO IT IS!

On Saturday night Nadine and I took turns handing out candy to the trick or treaters. We did not have as large a turnout as we sometimes do but it is always fun to see the kids dressed up in their costumes. I noticed several costumes that were worn the most. Some of the girls were dressed up as cowgirls. A lot of the little boys were dressed as their favorite superhero, while the older ones seemed to prefer scarier costumes.

Towards the end of the night one trick or treater came dressed up as Anne of Green Gables. The costume suited her perfectly, and I complimented her on her great choice. This girl was surprised that I recognized who she was dressed as. She shared with me that I was the first person that night who knew that she was dressed as Anne of Green Gables. I was a little surprised by that as my neighborhood has a lot of retirees living in it. I confessed to her that the reason I knew who she was dressed as was because I am old. Nadine came out to the end of the driveway shortly after this girl and her friends left. When I told Nadine that she just missed seeing this girl dressed up as Anne of Green Gables, she took a quick stroll down the street to take a look at the costume for herself. I liked a lot of costumes worn on Halloween but that is the one that stood out to me the most.

As I thought about this mid-week message on Monday, I found myself thinking back to how so few people recognized who this girl was dressed up as. It reminded me how after Jesus rose back to life some people did not recognize Him. Mary Magdalene did not recognize at first that Jesus was standing behind her at the empty tomb. She thought it was the gardener who asked why she was crying. But when she heard her name spoken, she recognized that it was Jesus who was standing there.

We see the same thing happen later that day as two of Jesus' followers were walking back to their home in Emmaus after being in Jerusalem for the Passover. As they were walking along, they suddenly were joined by Jesus, but they did not recognize Him. They listened as this stranger explained to them the Scriptures pertaining to why the Messiah would have to suffer all the things that transpired pertaining to His death and resurrection before He could enter into His glory. It was not until these two followers broke bread with Jesus in their home that they recognized it was

indeed Him. In these instances, Mary Magdalene and the two followers from Emmaus did not recognize Jesus. During His three-year public ministry, many people recognized Jesus by name and as being a rabbi but did not recognize Him as the Messiah.

One of the things that can bring so much comfort and assurance to us as believers on a daily basis is being able to recognize Jesus' presence among us. He assured us in **Matthew 28:20 20** before His ascension back into heaven that **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

As we saw with Mary Magdalene and the two followers from Emmaus, emotions like grief, disappointment, and other circumstances may prevent us from recognizing Jesus' presence with us in those moments. For us to recognize Jesus' presence with us in these and other moments, it is important for us to learn from what He taught in **John 10** about how sheep are able to know when their shepherd is present with them:

But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. (John 10:2-4)

Jesus taught in this example that because sheep come to recognize the voice of the shepherd who is caring for them, they will be more willing to follow him because of the relationship and bond of trust that has been formed. For us to recognize Jesus' presence with us, it is important for us to be able to discern His voice speaking to us amongst all the voices vying for our attention. It is also important that we are consistently following Him daily. If we are not being consistent when it comes to following Him then we will fail to be able to recognize His presence.

I wonder how many times Jesus has said, "Unfortunately they did not recognize who I was." Let's make sure as His sheep, that we always recognize our Good Shepherd's presence with us.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean