

Witness Unhindered:
“Train Wreck Conversion”
 Acts 9: 1-22, 31

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“The life of discipleship is not a matter of coming up with a Gospel I can live with; it's a matter of learning to live with all of the scandal of the Gospel--and that can take a lifetime. Graham Greene's 'whiskey priest' doesn't for a moment think that the church should revise its doctrine and standards in order to make him feel comfortable about his fornication--even if he might lament what seems to be a denial of some feature of his humanness. All of his doubts and suspicion and resistance are not skeptical gambits that set him off in search of a liberal Christianity he can live with; they are, instead, features of a life of sanctification, or lack thereof. And no one is surprised by that. The prayer of the doubter is not, 'Lord I believe, conform to the measure of my unbelief,' but rather: 'Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief.'” - James K.A. Smith

“Anyone can be sentimental about the Nativity; any fool can feel like a Christian at Christmas. But Easter is the main event; if you don't believe in the resurrection, you're not a believer.”
 - John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*

"Jesus was the only one that ever raised the dead," The Misfit continued, "and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then there's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can . . ."
 - Flannery O'Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- The last three vignettes from the book of Acts have depicted the Gospel breaking down barriers to welcome people into the family of God. Each portrays a unique resistance level to the Gospel and a unique reception of grace.
 - Which of the three stands out to you? Why?
 - How are they similar and unique?
 - Which resonates with your own experience of coming to faith?
- Saul's conversion is dramatic and technicolor.
 - Do you ever worry that your own story is not as dramatic or eventful?
 - What are the marks of true conversion?
 - How can we know that we are saved even if our story lacks the drama of Saul's?
- The sermon asserts that the Resurrection disorients our lives and takes center stage.
 - How has coming to faith in Jesus brought disorientation and disruption to your life?
 - How does Flannery O'Connor's words from her character, The Misfit, inform that sense of disruption?
- Along with the disorientation the Resurrection brings relief and reorientation.
 - How is God reshaping your life through this grace?
 - Where are you experiencing the hope of the Resurrection? Where do you need it more?