When you point a finger at someone else you forget the fingers pointing back at yourself. Finger pointing is a popular but dangerous activity. On Sundays through the season of Lent we will focus on several significant “objects” which surface during the biblical accounts which narrate this holy season of Lent. During Lent we prepare to commemorate Christ’s death and resurrection – we look within ourselves, examine our inner motives, and come clean before a loving and forgiving God.

Today we will focus our attention on the SWORD that Peter drew in defense of Jesus. The SWORD, both as a useful tool, and as an object of aggression, violence and destruction. At Jesus’ arrest, we’re told Peter drew and used a sword to protect his master. Jesus sternly commands Peter to put away his sword – his object of aggression. Matthew adds a familiar promise, “all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”

We most often point fingers, identifying a fault or dislike in others. In all honesty, we point fingers at others only because we have first identified fault within ourselves. Whether or not we’re willing to admit it, we often lash out at others because of anger or frustration at own sinfulness and faults.

Blame began in the Garden with Adam and Eve, but it didn’t end there. Listen carefully. See if you recognize yourself in the characters of the story and within the words of God for you today. And then go ahead and point . . . . but don’t forget point to Jesus, our only hope – the author and finisher of our faith.

DRAMA

Sermon
Some people have trouble with Jesus because He wasn’t direct enough! He was often willing to go the extra mile with people – friends AND enemies. Others believe He was too direct. He called a spade a spade. A sin a sin.

Yet He was also forgiving and gentle – let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.

He would often say things like, “my time has not yet come” Some felt and still feel He was (and is) too soft.
Yet at other times he was very direct and said things like, “You have heard it was said “don’t kill,” but I say to you, “whoever hates his brother is a murderer.”

In the end, when His enemies came to lead Him away, He was very willing to be led, as a lamb to the slaughter – for us.

At His arrest . . . .

Pointing . . . John 18:4-6
“Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said.”

When I think of Jesus’ arrest and trial, I think a lot about “pointing fingers”

1. An identifying finger
2. An accusing finger
3. An “idea” finger

And I think about that old adage, that when you point a finger at someone else, you’ve got at least three pointing back at yourself.

I think – I often point fingers at others because I have identified something in them of which we’re already aware in ourselves. I suspect you know what I mean!

1. An identifying finger
   • You are the one
     o winner
     o loser
   • Your sin will find you out –
     o Adam and Eve hid in the garden –
     o God’s question, “where are you?” as if He didn’t know
     o It’s so easy to point out sin in others and ignore it in ourselves
     o When a detachment of soldiers came with torches, landers and weapons to arrest Jesus, Peter acted quickly to defend Jesus.
     o He drew a sword and struck a servant of the high priest.
     o Not “What would Jesus do?” but “What would you have done?”
     o Would you have defended Jesus?
     o Would you have drawn a sword to protect Jesus?
     o My advice to Peter? If you have a tiger in the house – you don’t have to defend Him!
     o Part of my sin is to lash out at others, in a way that I would really like to lash out at myself – but I’m afraid to.
     o If I can just divert the attention onto someone else – no one will notice my defects.
     o Peter, who later denied Jesus – THREE TIMES no less – strikes out at one He perceives as enemy.
     o I have met the enemy and the enemy is ME!
     o Earlier, Jesus had predicted that He was going up to Jerusalem, and there would be arrested and crucified. Peter quickly stood and boldly said, “that must never happen Lord,"
     o To which Jesus replied, “Get behind me – Satan.”
     o What if Peter had been successful in convincing Jesus to avoid Jerusalem – to avoid His appointed death?
       ▪ We would still be in our sins
     o What if Peter’s fancy sword work that day would have repulsed those who came to arrest Jesus . . .
       ▪ We would still be in our sins.
     o “But Lord. We can’t just stand by and watch you arrested?”
- Or can we?

- I’m thinking of DaVinci’s last Supper
- Thomas pointing as depicted in DaVinci’s famous painting of the Last supper?
- Tradition, not the scripture paints a picture of disciples who failed
  - Peter who denied
  - Thomas who doubted
  - And Judas who betrayed
- But what about you?
- The identifying finger points to you
- You are the one!

2. Then there’s the An accusing finger

- Who done it?
  - I know!
  - OT I don’t know!
- You done it!
  - Let’s try to divert the attention onto someone else
  - The blame game
  - The shame game – FINGER
  - It begins in family
  - It is played out on the playground and in the work place
  - School is a good place to practice the accusing finger because everything is graded and evaluated.
  - We all know where we stand
  - I always knew where I would graduate – in the upper half of the lower third of my class!

- Finally we come to church – to our Lord – and say, “I a poor, miserable sinner confess all that I’ve done.
- Admission - I did it!
- The pointing finger comes back to us!
- Whether we strike out with a sword, or with words – we know who is guilty.
- In our heart of hearts we know we have failed –
- We know we have done something wrong and don’t quite know how to put all the pieces back together again!

3. Finally there’s the An “Idea” finger

- God says, I’ve got an idea
  - Thomas pointing in DaVinci’s Last supper?
  - Point to God – It’s His fault – He put the fruit on the tree
  - Or GOD has a better idea
- Now His first good idea, in the garden, speaking to the woman and to the serpent: Gen 3:15 - I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
- And God’s good ideas keep coming – Isaiah 53: Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the
punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- I’ve always been intrigued by the pairs of words – the couplets in Isaiah 53 – He – us, His – mine.
- Where we failed Jesus succeeded
- And He succeeds today
- In the Gospel of Luke we learn that after Peter used his sword to cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant – Jesus healed the man.
- Whenever we, like Peter become violent and take up a sword – Jesus reaches out a healing, and forgiving hand.

4. A “God thing”

- All who take the sword shall perish by the sword.”
- The Bible clearly demands retribution, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”
- But Jesus also invites us “turn the other cheek”
- And Jesus will have the last word ..
- When they came to arrest Him – Jesus identified Himself - I am He
- A name – is more than an identity.

Conclusion

When confronted with a conflict or violence, I would suggest that instead of raising your voice one notch, lower it two!

Instead of raising your sword in destruction, try to turn it into a plow and do something constructive

Instead of pointing the finger, why not lend a hand.

That’s what Jesus did

That’s how He wants us to celebrate His resurrection.

He died instead of Us

And He rose to show us the way of hope!

My advice to Peter, “If you have a tiger in the house, you don’t have to defend Him”

Let Him live for you.