

King of Glory Lutheran Church
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Year C: Easter 3: John 21:1-19
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John 21:1-19

¹After he appeared to his followers in Jerusalem, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

Who am I? Why am I here?ⁱ

Have you ever asked yourself these questions?

Today as we hear this story of Peter fishing I wonder what Peter was thinking about out there in the boat on the water. Was Peter asking himself questions like Who am I? Why am I here?

I think he just might have been. After all that had happened to Jesus it seems like Peter might be wondering where he fit in and what to do next.

Today in our reading from the gospel of John Peter decides to go fishing and his friends join him.

When we hear a story about fishing in the Bible we might think first about the day job of many of Jesus' first disciples. A lot of them were fisherman. When they went fishing it was done in order to survive. Going fishing was their job.

So why is Peter fishing now? After all that has happened, Jesus' death and resurrection, why in this moment does Peter decide to go fishing?

Maybe he was hungry. Maybe he needed to do something that was familiar. Maybe he wanted to be out on the water, quietly waiting for the fish to fill the nets.

Or maybe he felt close to Jesus when he was fishing. After all, it was when they were fishing that Jesus called Peter to follow him. Jesus told him that from that time on he would teach them all how to be fishers of people.

On that day Peter knew who he was and what he was meant to do.

So today, after all that has happened, Peter is out on the water, fishing and thinking about Jesus. But Peter and his friends didn't catch anything all night.

Wouldn't you know it, a hard night of work with no reward in the midst of a time that was already tough for the disciples.

But when the sun comes up Jesus is there on the shore and tells them to throw their nets off the other side, the right side of the boat. 153 fish fill the net, but it doesn't break.

And suddenly the disciples realize that the man on the shore is Jesus. Peter dives out of the boat and swims to shore. And when he gets to the beach there is a fire with fish and bread cooking.

If you didn't know the context of this story it might seem normal. Jesus eating breakfast with his disciples after they've brought in an incredibly huge catch of fish. But this is not just any visit from Jesus. Jesus is appearing to the disciples after his crucifixion, death and resurrection.

And the way Jesus reveals himself is pretty cool. The disciples recognize Jesus when nets that were empty are suddenly filled. Where there was nothing, now there is more than could have ever been imagined. And in this miracle, in this unexpected gift, they know that Jesus is there. They recognize him, they know him.

My favorite part of this resurrection story is that Jesus has cooked breakfast, he breaks the bread and passes it around and does the same with the fish. I love food but more than that, I love that Jesus cooks this meal and shares it on the beach.

This encounter with the resurrected Jesus is filled with things for all the senses. The disciples see Jesus, they taste the bread and fish, they smell the fire on this early morning and feel it's warmth, they hear Jesus bless the food and speak to them.

In this meal they share together, the disciples recognize Jesus, they know that he is with them. How many meals had they eaten together? How many times had they heard Jesus bless and break bread? How many times had they gathered around a fire eating and talking?

Now they are together again. Jesus has returned. The one they thought was dead is alive. The community they thought was broken has found healing and wholeness. The stomachs that were empty have been filled.

And this is especially true for Peter today. You might know that before Jesus was crucified Peter denied that he knew Jesus three times by another fire in the courtyard of the high priest.

Today Jesus asks Peter if he loves him. Three times Jesus asks and three times Peter says that he does. And three times Jesus tells Peter to "feed my sheep" and "tend my lambs."

When Jesus says the same thing three times in a row we all should be paying attention. I know Peter was.

Today Jesus gives Peter a mission. Peter who loved Jesus and followed Jesus. Peter who got scared and denied Jesus. Peter who mourned for Jesus. Peter who went fishing and wondered what was next for him.

Jesus invites Peter today to remember who he is and what he is meant to do. Because those who love Jesus are called to follow him and continue his work. To care for the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned, the enemy, the outcast, all in the name of Jesus. To catch people and gather people together with the good news of God's abundant love for all people.

This good news, this love Jesus speaks of cannot be separated from feeding and tending his people. To know Jesus and love Jesus is to know and love the people he loves, and that means everyone.

Jesus gives us the same invitation. When we ask, Who am I? Jesus invites us today to remember that we belong to him and to one another. And when we ask, Why am I here? Jesus invites us to remember and live out his mission and know our purpose to love and care for one another.

We need this story today, this invitation from Jesus. Because wherever we come from, wherever we've been, we too long to see Jesus on the shore, waiting for us, inviting us to share a meal together, showing us who we are and why we are here.

Jesus invites you to his table today. He knows that you need to be reminded of God's power to bring abundance out of nothing. He knows that you need to be fed so that you will have the strength to feed others. He knows that you need to always remember that you are a loved child of God called to share that love with the world.

So come to the table. Be refreshed and renewed by the love of Jesus. Find strength in the gifts he gives us in his words, in the bread and the wine, and in his people gathered together. Strengthened and blessed we find ourselves invited to remain close to Jesus, loving him as he loves us, living out that love in service to others.

God's love never ends. So go fishing for people the way Jesus has taught us. Find rest and strength in Jesus who invites you to his table that you might know his presence and love. And then take those gifts out to people who are hungry for the same.

Amen.

ⁱ "Easter 3 C: Two Things Everyone Needs" posted by David Lose on April 5, 2016 in Dear Partner on davidlose.net.