

**Breakfast with Jesus**  
**John 21:1-25**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**  
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West Union, IA  
May 12, 2019

Our gospel reading for today is John, chapter 21, verse 1 through 25; actually, the whole chapter. It begins, "After these things..." referring to the events on the first day of the week, when Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, after she found the empty tomb. That evening when Jesus appeared to the disciples, without Thomas, and a week later when Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas. In John, this will be the fourth post resurrection appearance of Jesus: once to Mary, and three times to the disciples. The scene has moved from Jerusalem, to Galilee, on the bank of the Sea of Galilee, here called the Sea of Tiberias. I would like you to pay attention to two characters in the story: Peter, or Simon son of John, and "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Listen now to the account when Jesus appeared to some of the disciples:

<sup>21:1</sup> After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way.

<sup>2</sup> Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples.

<sup>3</sup> Simon 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.

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No."

<sup>6</sup> He 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.

<sup>7</sup> That 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.

<sup>8</sup> But 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. <sup>9</sup> When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

<sup>11</sup> So 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.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus 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. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

<sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

<sup>15</sup> When 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."

<sup>16</sup> A 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."

<sup>17</sup> He 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."

<sup>18</sup> Very 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." <sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

<sup>20</sup> Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?"

<sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!"

<sup>23</sup> So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

<sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.

<sup>25</sup> But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

## Sermon

Some time after that first week, the first week after the resurrection of Jesus; after Jesus appeared the disciples, then returned a week later to address the doubts of Thomas, a group of seven disciples are at the lake shore; in Galilee, at the Sea of Tiberias. (Also known as the Sea of Galilee.) When Peter announces: "I am going fishing." And all the others say: "We will go with you."

After everything that the disciples had seen, and done, and heard; the amazing entrance into Jerusalem, and the week that included a dinner with Jesus, where he washed their feet. Then, on that very night, Jesus was arrested and taken away. Then the farce of a trial, the abuse he endured, and the crucifixion of Friday. Then the rumors of the empty tomb, and two appearances of Jesus himself; not as a ghost but a living, breathing, and eating man in the flesh. After all of that, these seven disciples journey to Galilee, where so much of their time had been spent, where Jesus had taught the people, and performed many signs, and at the lake shore, Peter decides to fall back on what he knows best, fishing, and the others follow him.

And, after fishing through the night, they have nothing to show for their efforts – not one fish has been caught in their net. When the sun begins to come up, a man, they have no idea who, standing on the shore calls to them: "Children, you have no fish."

Now, I am sure you can imagine how the tired, frustrated men would have responded: "Who are you calling children?" "No, we don't, what business of it is yours." "Why don't you come out here and try to catch fish in this bankity-blank lake!" But they simply respond: "No."

Then they receive some unsolicited advice: "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

Now, I refuse to believe that seven grown men, at least three of them professional fishermen, spent the whole night fishing in one place, casting the net only to the left side of the boat. Don't you think that they would have paddled around a little casting the net to the left, AND RIGHT sides of the boat. But the exhausted men gave it one more try, and cast the net to the right side of the boat. When they begin to pull in the net it is so heavy that they couldn't bring it in, because there were so many fish caught in the net!

What they are experiencing is a miracle of abundance, just like when Jesus was at the wedding in Cana and turned six clay jars of water into the 150 gallons of the finest wine. Or when on the shore of this same lake, Jesus turned five barley loaves and two fish into an abundance of food that fed five

thousand men, women, and children, with twelve baskets of leftovers. A miracle, and this could only be a miracle, meant only one thing; and the disciple whom Jesus loved was the first to figure it out, and tell Peter: "It is the Lord!" And Peter puts on his clothes, and jumps in the water, in order to get to Jesus quicker.

When the boat makes it to shore, and Peter helps pull the net up on the bank, there are 153 fish. Further evidence of the miraculous nature of the catch. And, Jesus has for them a fire with fish and bread prepared for breakfast. Then, Jesus feeds them first the bread, then the fish.

Let's stop there for now, and consider the two characters that I asked you to pay attention to: Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. The two men react differently to the sign that they have witnessed. The disciple Jesus loved is the first to realize who it is standing on the shore: "It is the Lord," he told Peter, and Peter jumps in the water, when the boat is 100 yards, the length of a football field, to go to Jesus. The two men respond in their own ways. The actions of these two men can show us something about life as a disciple.

The first step is to recognize the presence of the Lord, and the second is to take action. But as we hear in our reading it doesn't have to be the same person, and not every person has to do both things. Some people might be adept at discerning the presence and will of the Lord, and others might be more comfortable taking action. In these two men, we can see the roles of the church: to worship God and go out in the world in mission. Being in the presence of our Lord and serving our lord in the world.

As our reading continues, as Jesus asks if Peter loves him, each time Peter is given the task to care for Jesus' flock. Peter the man of action is given the work of caring for the flock of God. And Jesus tells Peter to "follow me." Peter is given the task of mission and the calling to follow Jesus.

Then when Peter asks about the disciple whom Jesus loved, Jesus tells Peter not worry about him, "follow me." And in the end of our reading we learn that the disciple Jesus loved is the one who recorded the events reported in the gospel of John. Peter and John, once again, are given different roles in the church.

Peter is the one who spreads the good news through preaching and action. The one who is imprisoned and testifies to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. John is the one who wrote and circulated that same truth through words on the page.

Everyone has their role in the church. Paul will later write that the Spirit gives gifts to each person as they are capable. It is our responsibility as the Church of Christ to respond and use the gifts that we receive; some in worship, and some in mission. Some in discern God's will, and others in spreading the word. Being the church takes many kinds of people, serving the Lord in different ways.

It is most important for each and every one of us to realize what is our role, what is our calling in the church. In this church called Bethel, and in the greater Church of Jesus Christ. We are gifted by God, and lead by the Spirit to be individual servants of God, and together to be the body of Christ in the world.

Let us pray:

Holy God, as you came to the disciples on the shore of the lake, you come to each of us. You call us to be your church and to be servants of your gospel to the world. Help everyone here today, and all your children, to feel your presence and find our path in the church and in your world. Amen.