

John 21:1-19

1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 2 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. 3 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. 4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 6 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. 7 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. 8 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.

9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 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. 12 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. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 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." 16 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." 17 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.

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

John 21:1-19

I have sometimes wondered what the disciples were doing out on this beach by the sea where the resurrected Jesus finds them.

They are back near where their story with Jesus began. It appears they have gone home.

The fishing boat is nearby. They were fishermen.

It was helpful for me to recall a few of the things that led up to this part of the story.

In each one of the gospels, one way or another the disciples came to understand that they were supposed to go to Galilee where the resurrected Jesus would meet them.

The gospel of John is the only one that offers a story that tells what happened when they followed their instructions,

and if this is it, we can learn a great deal by taking a look at it.

This story is given to us in four parts actually and each part is sufficient for preaching a sermon on its own.

The first section gives us some insight into the need to have the temperament of both Peter and John in order to first recognize Jesus presence,

and then to take action.

Neither the understanding and discernment of John nor the re-action of Peter alone constitute authentic faith; we need them both,

and that is why ministry takes all of us.

The second section speaks to the reception of new believers into the faith and that all we can do is receive what Jesus has given us,

But you gotta go fishin!.

In addition to that, this part of the passage speaks to the strength of the faith community, or the church—that it will not be torn apart by schism and faction

even though it is made up of so many and so diverse a gathering of God's people

just as the nets were not torn by the large catch of fish.

On the one hand, the third section is about the grace of Jesus that leads to reconciliation as he gives Peter the opportunity to profess his love for Jesus three times;

the same number of times he denied even knowing Jesus in the wee hours of the morning after Jesus was arrested, and while He was on trial.

But this third section also speaks to the mission within the church to nurture faith and discipleship

The last section lets Peter know that when he gave himself to Jesus he gave himself for life,

and that his life would not end on his own terms,

but Jesus calls him to follow in spite of what may come.

All of this makes it difficult to decide what to preach on in any one sermon.

I could keep you here for a really long time if I tried to cover it all.

What really catches my attention this week are the parts about fishin’.

Jesus calls out,

You haven’t caught anything yet, have you?

No, nothing

Throw your nets out on the right side!

Now come, lets eat.

You notice that no fish were caught under Peter’s leadership aside from Jesus.

The disciples followed Jesus instructions and caught 153 large fish, and they had a great breakfast!

But more importantly we see that it was Jesus who provided the catch, the disciples were simply being faithful to their calling—

they threw their nets out the way Jesus told them to.

That doesn’t sound too complicated.

It is time for us to go fishing.

Your council has made evangelism a priority for this year.

Reaching out into the community telling the story of God’s love and grace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that others might come to believe.

We are called to extend the invitation to others so that they may experience what we experience—God’s presence and power in our lives.

We can do that in many ways, but we have to figure it out.

That is part of the work of fishin’.

I need your help. We need to put a team together to learn about communicating with the different generations of people in our community.

I, or one of our council people, may be calling on you to help figure this out.

It will take courageous people from every generation to work on this, so consider what you may have to offer to God’s mission here.

A quote from Pope Frances showed up on Facebook today that speaks to Jesus’ words.

He said,

“I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets,

rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

You are the church.

Lets go fishin’.

I also will be scheduling a reception of new members in the next weeks as soon as I can schedule the events associated with that,

so be on the watch for that information.

I mentioned before that the untorn nets are our reminder that because we love one another in the ways we do the church remains untorn as well.

You know how vital this is to our mission and ministry. The love we share here is the evidence of Christ's presence among us, and the intimate relationship we have with Him.

This love comes only one way; through Him.

The strength of the gathering of God's people comes from the nurture, teaching, and care given to all who gather here.

Feed my lambs; tend my sheep; Peter, feed my sheep.

For any of us to grow in faith and in our relationship with Christ we need to be fed and tended to.

For those who are new to this faith the rest of us say we hold so dear, this is one of the most important things we can do;

Feed the word of God, His love and grace and the power of His Spirit to those who are just starting out.

We need to tend to the cares, concerns and worries of one another.

Even those who are no longer lambs in the faith but grown sheep need to be fed and nourished through teaching, hearing God's word,

receiving the sacraments which hold and convey the power of God through water, bread and wine.

This passage is rich in wisdom, in its message about mission and the internal workings of the church

and I may not have done a good job of scratching the surface of what that means for use.

But we know God has given us a mission that calls us to the follow just as Jesus did Peter,

A mission that calls us to the fish nets with a will for working, loving, for gathering the hearts of those who are yearning for something more than what they have;

hope, love, community, forgiveness, grace.

Lets go fishin'!