

Yet Again...and Again  
John 21:1-14 (19)  
Preached May 4, 2025

Happy Easter, again! It has been a few weeks since we celebrated the Resurrection. How has your life been? For some of you, life might be very good right now. You have enjoyed the Easter worship, and Easter dinner, and now you are enjoying the warm, green days of spring. You are full of energy, and anticipating a great time of vacations and visits, doing the things you love with the people you love. But for some of us, maybe it's not so good. Maybe you are dealing with illnesses, or with worries, with financial stresses or family concerns. And probably for most of us I imagine life been so-so. For me, I have been dragging my tail since Palm Sunday. I don't know why, but I can't seem to get out of the funk. But I'm still working, still doing, still trying.

Good or bad, I imagine we are all simply trying to keep one foot in front of the other. And somehow, through the grind of our daily living, we have lost sight of the resurrection. Now I don't mean that we don't know that Jesus is risen, not that we haven't sung our hallelujahs, and maybe even have felt some hope. But it's just not there. And it's not that we don't believe, and even anticipate, that 'our eternal home is in heaven', or that, as one of my friends says, "God is good, all the time." I mean rather, somehow, we've missed the gift of resurrection that lies hidden, here and now, in our daily lives.

I think, at least in part, that is what today's Scripture is trying to point us toward. The gospel begins by saying 'After all these things Jesus showed himself again to his disciples.' And I have to ask, how long has it been?! Three weeks, 40 days? How long? But here the disciples are living very ordinary days, filled with ordinary work. The disciples are no longer hanging out in Jerusalem. They've gone home to Galilee, and to fishing – their same old village, same lake, same boats and nets... the same old work. Maybe they are not sure what to do now that Jesus is risen. There is no steering committee, and no future planning. They just 'carry on' as best they can. And that's when and where Jesus shows himself again. That may be where Jesus shows himself still – in our ordinary work-a-day lives.

I wonder how the disciples felt fishing that night on the lake. Were they feeling a bit 'at sea'? Did they still feel a sadness and loss? Did they now feel uncentered without Jesus' physical presence and guidance? Even experiencing Jesus' presence in the upper room may not have helped them take hold of any sense of 'what's next.' I wonder if Peter's idea to 'go fishing' was just that human characteristic of 'doing what you know needs to be done' – even if you come up with empty nets. After all, that is when Jesus showed up. Not when the disciples got in the boat, but in the morning, after a long, hard, fruitless night of work.

We've all been there, right? Feeling adrift and unsure of the next step. But we keep going on – and doing what we know needs to be done; tired, a bit baffled about what's next, but intent to keep on keeping on. We may wish for 'post-it' notes and some bread crumb trails, but it seems we are left at the moment to find our own way, even when the way is unclear.

That seems to be what has been happening here, with the disciples, or the fishermen, doing what they have always done. And yet, not 'too far off' there is Jesus, waiting on the shore, at the break of day. Jesus even goes so far as to point out to his fishermen-disciples the circumstances they are in – commenting to them 'you haven't caught anything, have you?' I wonder how the disciples felt after that empty labor. Tired for sure, maybe frustrated, maybe disheartened. In fact, at this point, they can't even recognize

Jesus' presence with them. But that's ok. Jesus doesn't leave them there, and he doesn't chide them. He offers them help they may not have recognized they needed – telling them to 'move your nets to the other side of the boat.' And I wonder if Jesus had a wry smile when he said 'there you will find some fish.' Yeah, they did, a boat load. Enough fish that they couldn't lift the nets and had to tow them ashore. Enough of a catch to catch their attention. 'Oh, its' Jesus, the Lord is here.'

Has that ever happened to you? You are slogging away, wrapped up in a struggle or in the moment, and suddenly something shifts, and a sense of peace or grace or joy meets you, and wow – everything seems different. 'Oh, Oh, God is here, with me, with us, now!' But has anything really changed? Maybe not in some tangible way, and yet everything has changed; not because God has suddenly shown up, but now you recognize Christ is in your midst. And if that happens, no - when that happens, how do you respond?

Well, Peter, always the impetuous man, throws on a shirt and then jumps in and swims to shore. I imagine he sure is happy to see Jesus. It seems he is not thinking about his betrayal in the high priest's courtyard, when the cock crowed three times. Because if he had that on his mind, I imagine he'd either be really slow rowing that boat to shore or he'd jump in and swim the other way – into the deep. But he knows it was Jesus and he was eager to meet him again.

Are we always so eager to 'come to Jesus,' or might we, at times, hesitate? Do we engage God with assurance, eagerness, and maybe even naivete, or does our sense of unworthiness, or regret, hold us back?

Now, whether the fishermen (or us) were eager or not, I imagine Jesus was very happy to see Peter and all his disciples Jesus has even prepared a gracious, welcoming place for them – a fire to warm them, food to feed them, and time to simply be with him. "Come and have breakfast" he called to them. I can't imagine a better experience than breakfast on a beach, and with Jesus none-the-less! Jesus even invites them to also bring their gifts, their fish, to his table, to share together as one.

But that is the character of Christ, always. He prepares a table and breaks bread with friends and with strangers. He shares words of mercy and grace, beckoning one and all into a love which knows no bounds. Christ calls us to a table of love and then into a love, not just of the heart and spirit, but of compassion and service. At the table Jesus directs our love - to find our way to 'feed his sheep' and 'care for his lambs.' And, in the end, in whichever way we go, in whatever we do, we joyfully answer Christ's call "*As for you, follow me.*"

That invitation, by the way, still stands, there is a table spread before us with the promise of Christ's living presence with us, today, here and now. And there is a world still awaiting to receive good news.

It is a sign, really, a simple ordinary sign that today and every day, is filled with resurrection life.

So, my friends, come, enjoy the feast. Amen.

Rev. Rosemary Dawson