

Sunday, May 5, 2019 – Third Sunday of Easter
“Served by Jesus”

John 21: 1-14

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Story Interrupted Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

“This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after He was raised from the dead.”

Is Jesus truly, physically, alive again or not? Has it all been real or did they just imagine it? They had seen Him that first Sunday, in Jerusalem when He appeared to them in the room where they were hiding in fear for their lives. Thomas was not with them. A week later they were still there and Jesus appeared again and Thomas was convinced.

Sometime during His ministry Jesus had instructed them that He would meet them in Galilee. The angels at the tomb had reminded the women to tell Peter and the others, “He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see Him just as He told you.” (Mark 16:7). It is about an 80 mile walk from Jerusalem back to their home base in the fishing village of Capernaum. Now what? Surely that had to be the number one topic of conversation all the way home. Now what?

Easter has come and gone for us too. We certainly had a terrific celebration, glorious music that made your heart swell. But that was fourteen days ago. And like the disciples we’ve traveled a good distance through life since Easter Sunday. So what do you think? Is Jesus alive or not? What does your life say? We’ve had some ups. Our Beyond 2020 night was an encouraging, hopeful and challenging time to celebrate the past and look forward in hope. Wednesday night we learned that an associate pastor will be coming to Mountain View this summer. I hope good things have happened in your life, too.

But let’s also be honest – in a lot of ways it hasn’t really felt much different. Maybe there’s tension in the office, not enough time to do all things you should do, which eliminates the possibility of doing anything you want to do, you didn’t get to any of the kids ball games this past week, your relationships had a few bumps or maybe a fatal collision, you’ve got a physical at the doctor this week, and there are about a dozen deadlines staring you in the face in the next couple days.

Ever feel like you are living on the edge? Sometimes I can't tell whether it's the cutting edge of something spectacular or the edge of disaster. Maybe you've had a crisis that's wiped you out emotionally and financially and you are on the edge of collapse. Maybe it's just one of those empty-spiritually-drained-going-through-the-motions-without-much-joy moments. Maybe it's an exciting time – you're changing, learning, growing, moving up, relocating, starting over, but finding it hard to let go of the familiar. Old habits, old ways of thinking and acting keep dragging you backward.

Add to that: People are getting sick, people you know and love, seriously sick. Loved ones are dying. The church has incredible ministry opportunities and incredible people called to serve Christ, but how do you get the two together and do so responsibly stewarding our resources? After the long travel since Easter – now what?

I know, let's go fishing. It seemed like a perfectly natural thing to do. After all they were fishermen by trade. Why sit around and wait? It will give us something to do and if we make catch we can sell it and have some funds available when Jesus comes, if Jesus comes. Yeah, let's go fishing.

But they fished all night and caught nothing. And now there's some guy standing on the shore giving them fishing tips! "Friends, haven't you caught any fish?" The answer is short and curt as you might expect if you've ever been there or done that, "No." Now leave us alone so we can finish up and get out of here.

But there is something different about this character, something compelling, something that made it seem natural to do what He asked. There is a command and a promise. "Throw your nets over the right side of the boat and you will find some." No "ifs" or "maybes". Just, do "this" and "that" will happen. It is a remarkable moment. Professional fishermen listening to a stranger calling to them from the shore and they respond without an argument or a question.

Jesus comes to you out on the edge of wherever you are. He already knows the situation, He already knows your condition, but still He asks. "Haven't you any fish? Have you worked as hard as you know how and then some and still have nothing to show for it?" Jesus seeks to bring you to the point of revealing your heart to Him, to acknowledge and state your situation.

Now hold on because something powerful is about to happen. They let down their nets as the stranger instructed and instantly they were full with so many fish they were unable to haul them into the boat. Now all of this sounds remarkably familiar, isn't it? Wasn't it right here on this very same lake that Jesus had come along after they had fished all night without catching anything once before?

He climbed into Peter's boat and taught the people along this very shore. Then He had commanded them to put out into the deep water and let down their nets for a catch. Peter had protested, remember. "Lord we fished all night and caught nothing, and you want us to do it again, in the middle of the afternoon, in the deep water where there are no fish? But if you really want us to, we'll do what you say, even if it's a waste of time and energy."

It was just like this. They did what Jesus said and they had such a large catch of fish their nets began to break. Peter fell down before Jesus confessing his doubt and unwillingness to trust, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." And what did Jesus say, do you remember? "Don't be afraid, from now on you will catch men!" And they pulled their boats onto the shore and left everything and followed Him.

All of sudden it comes flashing back. First into John's heart and mind and then from his lips to Peter's ears, "It is the Lord!" Peter can't contain himself. He goes overboard to get to Jesus as fast as he can. Is Jesus really alive? Physically, bodily resurrected to life? Yes. It is the Lord and He has come and through the miracle of His presence He opens the eyes of their faith to see Him and discover again the joy of their salvation, their calling, and their purpose for life.

As they come to shore He has everything prepared for them. The coals are already there. Fish, that He has provided are cooking and bread. There is nothing for them to do except come and enjoy His presence and His hospitality.

Look, here comes Jesus. He seeks to open the eyes of your faith again, to rediscover the joy of your salvation, your calling, and your purpose. He calls to you from the edge of the water of that baptismal font. Remember who you are! He has called you by name. You are His and nothing can separate you from His love. Now, He knows your condition. He knows your situation, but still He calls out to you. How's it going? How's your life? And we have responded

back to Him. Lord, it's a mess again. We've not loved you with our whole heart. We've not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

And now most spectacular miracle of all time has occurred. "Your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Jesus died on the cross so that He could say those words to you again this morning. Then He did rise from the dead and this was now the third time that He showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised and they never looked back to those old fishing boats again. Forgiven and renewed He has prepared a meal for you this morning. By the same power that filled the disciples net up with fish and had breakfast waiting for them when they arrived, Jesus puts Himself in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper.

Is Jesus alive or not? What do you say? Jesus said to them, "Come have breakfast." He invites you to His table too. Take a deep breath. Come back from the edge of wherever you have been this week. You don't need question, "Who are you?" Relax with Jesus for a few minutes. Let down your guard. Let Him serve you.

They caught 153 fish that day. Ask any fishermen to tell you their most memorable catch and you will get a detailed description of everything from weather conditions to the exact location and time. It was a miraculous day of blessing and abundance that they never forgot. Just like today. Jesus has come to meet you. He promises that no matter how good or bad things might be right now in your life that He will bless you in ways you can't begin to imagine. And then He feeds you with His life giving body and blood for another week of living on the edge. Amen.