

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Easter 3C
May 1, 2022
John 21:1-14 (15-19)

Gone Fishing

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." . . . 14 This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. (John 21:19 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

It's said that repetition is the mother of all learning. That's why we spend so much time reviewing the basics, the fundamentals. Athletes and musicians know the countless repetitions of various drills to nail down certain skills, and no matter the level, including professionals, they return to the basics over and over again. In any field of endeavor, it's necessary to constantly repeat the basic and fundamental practices and skills to grow and improve. So, too, the Church repeats what is most necessary for us to know, believe, and live – God's Word, the liturgy, the catechism, the hymns, the prayers. So, today, we see some repetition to help the disciples grow in faith and prepare them to be fishers of men.

Some time after Jesus had twice appeared to them in the upper room after His resurrection, the disciples had gone to Galilee as Jesus had said. Yet, while they waited for Jesus, Peter decided to go fishing and six other disciples went with him. Then, it must have seemed like déjà vu - fishing all night without catching anything, Jesus telling them to let down their nets on the right side of the boat, a miraculous catch of fish. After all, in Luke 5 we read that Jesus had asked Peter to put out a little from land so Jesus could teach the people. When He was done, He told them to push out to the deep and let down their nets. Though they had fished all night, they'd caught nothing. Yet, at Jesus' word, they did what He said. They caught so many fish their nets were breaking. They called their partners to help, and both boats began to sink. On that occasion, Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Jesus answered him, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." (Luke 5:1-10).

Today though, the disciples went out on their own. Jesus stood on shore asking if they'd caught anything. Not knowing who He was, they said, "No." He told them to try again. Again, they were blessed with a miraculous catch. At this, John told Peter, "It is the Lord." And instead of trying to get away from Jesus, Peter couldn't wait to get to Him. And then, Jesus fed them with fish and bread - which should have seemed familiar to them as well. "They knew it was the Lord."

Now, by hauling these nets full of fish, the disciples of the Lord are acting out for us the purpose and the power of His Word, which He had given these men to preach. Again, this was not the first time this happened. As Peter and the others cast their nets at the command of the Lord, so also did they go out to the nations, casting the net of the divine Word, proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus for our salvation. In the same way that our Lord Jesus had miraculously filled their nets in today's Gospel, so also did the risen Christ prosper the preaching of these men, gathering all Christians in the holy net of the Christian Church.

The miraculous catch of fish in today's Gospel reminds us of the important role that the teaching of the apostles must continue to play in everyday of our lives. We are not the fishers of men, but the New Testament writers still are. We are the fish in the nets, gathered in by these men so "that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). Therefore, we should take their Word seriously—read, mark, learn, and take it to heart—and never allow for any replacements.

Soon after the nets were filled, Peter jumped into the water with all his clothes on. This was no accident, but a deliberate act. "When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped [to the waist] for work, and he threw himself into the sea." We can think of this as Peter demonstrating to us the benefit and power of our Baptism into Christ. By clothing himself before entering the water, Peter brings to mind that Word of the Lord which states "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:27). And again, "not that we would be unclothed, but clothed" (2 Cor. 5:4). And yet again, "He has given me a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair" (Is. 61:3).

By entering the water in order to get to Jesus, Peter also reminds us of that earlier, Baptism-like event, when he got out of the boat to come to Jesus in the midst of the sea (Matt. 14:28-31). And Jesus grasped Peter by the hand in the water, and delivered His servant from death through the water.

In today's Gospel, Peter acts out for each of us the blessing and benefit of our own baptism in to Christ. Peter shows us that wet clothing—that is to say, baptismal clothing—is the single best way for us now to approach our crucified and risen Lord, so that we may stand in His presence and participate in His gifts.

And then there's the nourishing meal that had been prepared and laid out by Christ Himself. When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid on it, and bread... They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

If this bread-and-fish breakfast reminds you of how Jesus had earlier, miraculously fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, then you are headed in a good direction. Likewise, when

Jesus fed the 4,000 with seven loaves and a few fish. So, Jesus also provided for the needs of the disciples, and us.

All of this repetition happened – the catch of fish, the being fed with fish and bread – so that the disciples would believe in Jesus and His resurrection. All this was meant to strengthen them in their ministry of preaching Christ crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins. All of this was part of the fundamental message they would proclaim.

So, what about us? Jesus didn't call us to be fishers of men. He didn't tell us to let down our nets for a catch. He doesn't feed us with bread and fish. But He does provide for all your earthly needs. Even more, He feeds you a meal much better than bread and fish. He feeds you with His Body and Blood in the bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins.

So, with the preaching of the Word for the forgiveness of your sins, whereby you are gathered into the apostles' nets, as it were; the Miracle of Baptism, the washing away of sin, whereby you pass through the water to be with Jesus; the Holy Communion, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, whereby you eat and drink in the presence of the Lord: with these things, today's Gospel reviews the basics for us. Today's Gospel reviews and delivers to you the most essential things. Keep these things stuck in your mind. These things will help you to move forward. Above all, diligently guard yourselves against any and all things that would offer to help the preaching of the Word or the administration of Baptism and the Holy Communion—for these things need no help and no simplification. Beware of anything that gets in the way of the preaching of the Word, or your hearing of it, or the administration of Baptism and the Holy Communion—for anything outside of these things will only cloud and block your view of the crucified and risen Christ. Don't let anything replace the preaching of the Word or the administration of Baptism and the Holy Communion—for such replacements will lead you only away from Jesus and back into death.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (He is risen, indeed!) Alleluia! In the Word, in Baptism, and in Holy Communion, the resurrection now comes to you—and you join Peter in coming to Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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