

The Third Sunday of Easter, May 5, 2019

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The Risen Servant Revealed Again

[John 21:1–14](#)

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

AFTER THIS JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF AGAIN TO THE DISCIPLES BY THE SEA OF TIBERIAS. . . . THIS WAS NOW THE THIRD TIME THAT HE WAS REVEALED TO them AFTER HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD (vv 1, 14).

The first time Jesus revealed Himself was on Easter evening. The disciples were together in the upper room in Jerusalem. The doors were locked FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS. Thomas wasn't there. JESUS CAME AND STOOD AMONG THEM AND SAID, "PEACE BE WITH YOU," and then SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE (20:19–20). Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

The second time is similar. Same place, but one week later, AND this time THOMAS WAS WITH THEM, doubts and all. "UNLESS I SEE THE MARK OF THE NAILS and touch the scar, I WILL NEVER BELIEVE." Then JESUS CAME again AND STOOD AMONG THEM, saying, "PEACE BE WITH YOU. Thomas, PUT YOUR FINGER HERE. PUT YOUR HAND IN MY SIDE. DON'T DISBELIEVE, BUT BELIEVE!" (20:25–27). Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Then it happens again. The third time. This isn't just their imagination or wishful thinking. They're not expecting to find Jesus on the beach in Galilee any more than they expected Him to be in the upper room in Jerusalem. It's almost like risen Jesus can't stop coming to His disciples, can't stop being with them, no matter where they are or what they're doing. Totally different place, totally different setting, the same risen Jesus revealing Himself alive to the disciples. Alleluia! Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

3.

Yet something about this feels oddly familiar, like a repeat, a déjà vu, Groundhog's Day all over again. Let's see . . . the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Simon Peter GOING FISHING. In a boat on the water. THAT NIGHT THEY CAUGHT NOTHING (v 3). We've seen this before, haven't we? They've been here before, haven't they? Jesus is

risen from the dead and now . . . now they're right back where they started, back to where they were when they first met Jesus. Nothing seems to have changed. Still fishing, and the fishing's just as bad as it's ever been.

We know these disciples. They have histories, regrets, sins. SIMON PETER denied Jesus three times. THOMAS, as already mentioned, had his stubborn doubts. NATHANAEL questioned whether ANYTHING GOOD could COME OUT OF NAZARETH. James and John, the SONS OF ZEBEDEE, tried to get the best spots in Jesus' kingdom—the seats at His right and His left. And no doubt the TWO OTHER DISCIPLES with them had reasons to be ashamed, too (v 2). So it's not like this little band of brothers is especially worthy or deserving of the revelation they receive. The fact that JESUS REVEALED HIMSELF risen from the dead AGAIN is an act of grace—grace to these sinful disciples and to the whole Church (v 1).

Yet one thing is different: they WERE TOGETHER (v 2). Their daily lives may look the same as three years earlier when Jesus first called them, the fishing may not have changed much, but after the resurrection the disciples were together. To follow risen Jesus is to be together with other believers. This is how the Holy Spirit describes the Church: ALL WHO BELIEVED WERE TOGETHER (Acts 2:44). And the author to the Hebrews exhorts us TO STIR UP ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS, NOT NEGLECTING TO MEET TOGETHER, AS IS THE HABIT OF SOME, BUT ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER, AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY DRAWING NEAR (Heb 10:24–25). You need other Christians, brothers- and sisters-in-Christ, and they need you.

So the disciples WERE TOGETHER and doing what they knew how to do. Jesus doesn't rebuke Simon Peter or the others for going fishing again. Instead, He helps them. They went back to their nets, to the dirty, sweaty, often futile work of fishermen, to catching tilapia for Galilean tables. There's certainly nothing wrong with that. Easter doesn't mean the end of life or work. It means faithful living and working in a new light. In some ways, their lives are completely the same after Easter. But what's different is this: Jesus, our Lord, is alive forevermore and still serving His people!

2.

I know that our post-Easter season can seem a bit like the disciples back at their fishing. Life returns to its old, frustrating normal. It's not what we want it to be. We aren't what we want to be. Christ is risen . . . and then Monday morning rolls around. There's work to be done. Diapers to change. Garbage to take out. Bills to pay. Doctors to see. And I'm still struggling with the same sins, barely keeping my head above water, drowning in shame, overwhelmed with sorrow. It's back to fishing, and I'm no better at fishing than

I was before and the fish still aren't biting. Sometimes life feels like one string of long nights, bad catches, and empty nets . . .

JUST AS DAY WAS BREAKING, JESUS STOOD ON THE SHORE; YET THE DISCIPLES DIDN'T KNOW THAT IT WAS JESUS. That happens a lot after the resurrection (v 4). Mary in the garden. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He's right there, but they don't know it! Jesus is present in a new way, even when they can't see Him or don't recognize Him.

Now from the shore He calls out, "CHILDREN!" What a beautiful way to address His disciples. As if they're children at play, children under the care of a dear Father, children watched over by an elder Brother. "CHILDREN, DO YOU HAVE ANY FISH?" (v 5). No, none. All night and no fish. What's new? "CAST THE NET ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BOAT, AND YOU'LL FIND SOME" (v 6). As if it's a game! Like weary and frustrated children, He's there for them and helps them. Oh, dear children!

They take this stranger at His word. They trust that He knows things they don't and sees things they can't. SO THEY CAST the net, AND NOW THEY WEREN'T ABLE TO HAUL IT IN, BECAUSE OF THE MULTITUDE OF FISH (v 6). And we've seen this before, haven't we? They've been here before, haven't they? Suddenly, it clicks. THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED SAID TO PETER, "IT'S THE LORD!" (v 7). And before you know it, Peter's in the water, too, like he's a fish, like he's being dragged in by a net, dragged in with all his sins and failures. And we've seen this before, too. He's been here before. "LORD, IF IT'S YOU, COMMAND ME TO COME TO YOU ON THE WATER" (Mt 14:28), except this time Peter doesn't wait for the command and he doesn't bother to walk. While THE OTHER DISCIPLES CAME IN THE BOAT, DRAGGING THE NET FULL OF FISH, Peter swims the HUNDRED YARDS to shore (v 8).

Jesus directs the disciples' fishing. He provides the large catch into their nets. And then He provides more: WHEN THEY GOT OUT ON LAND, THEY SAW A CHARCOAL FIRE IN PLACE, WITH FISH LAID OUT ON IT, AND BREAD. JESUS SAID TO THEM, "BRING SOME OF THE FISH THAT YOU'VE JUST CAUGHT," so Simon Peter hauls THE NET ASHORE, FULL OF LARGE FISH, 153 OF THEM. AND ALTHOUGH THERE WERE SO MANY, THE NET WAS NOT TORN. JESUS SAID TO THEM, "COME AND HAVE BREAKFAST" (vv 9-12). Weary and hungry from their long night's work, Jesus invites them to eat. Bread and fish. We've seen this before, haven't we? They've been here before, haven't they? Remember the loaves and the fish. WHAT ARE THEY FOR SO MANY? (Jn 6:9). In the hands of Jesus, they're more than enough to satisfy hungry crowds and exhausted disciples.

1.

NOW NONE OF THE DISCIPLES DARED ASK HIM, “WHO ARE YOU?” THEY KNEW IT WAS THE LORD. JESUS CAME AND TOOK THE BREAD AND GAVE IT TO THEM, AND SO WITH THE FISH (vv 12–13). Jesus feeds them. Jesus feeds us.

IT’S THE LORD! The Lord whose life is one of service: “THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY” (Mk 10:45). “I AM AMONG YOU AS THE ONE WHO SERVES” (Lk 22:27). Whose death is about serving: HE LAID ASIDE HIS OUTER GARMENTS, AND TAKING A TOWEL, TIED IT ROUND HIS WAIST, like a servant. THEN HE Poured WATER INTO A BASIN AND BEGAN TO WASH THE DISCIPLES’ FEET AND TO WIPE THEM WITH THE TOWEL THAT WAS WRAPPED ROUND HIM (Jn 13:4–5), showing how He would serve in dying. And now we see that His resurrection is also about Him serving—serving His disciples, His Church, and us as we go about our daily lives.

Risen from the dead, Jesus serves His disciples and us.

And thanks be to God that He does! As we go about our daily life, working in our livelihoods, serving our families and neighbors, it can be wearying and frustrating. We’ve been here before. It leaves us tired and hungry. Sometimes we’re up all night with nothing to show for it. And yet Jesus is close. He keeps coming to us. These things aren’t beneath Him. They don’t escape His notice. Nothing is too small for Him, too ordinary for Him, not even fishing nets or breakfast. He cares about your daily life and your daily needs. True, you may not yet see Him on the shore, but He’s there. He’s serving. He’s directing. He’s preparing. And He’s got a meal laid out to strengthen you. He’ll be there when the light of the new day dawns, after the long and weary night. See, IT’S THE LORD! Risen Jesus serves us, so that we can serve others in our daily lives, until we see Him at dawn on the shore and join in the endless praise of heaven.

THIS WAS NOW THE THIRD TIME THAT JESUS WAS REVEALED TO THE DISCIPLES AFTER HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD (v 14). They ATE AND DRANK WITH HIM (Acts 10:41). They are witnesses of His resurrection. It’s enough. This is what we need. “COME,” our risen Lord says again, with a meal already prepared, “COME, children, AND BREAK YOUR FAST. Come and eat.”

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:7
