

## The Easter Life Continues

John 21:1-19

Easter Continues! Christ is risen, He has risen indeed, Alleluia! Alleluia! Last week's gospel dealt with fearful disciples locked behind closed doors and the risen Jesus with His wounds of crucifixion appearing and greeting them with His peace. The disciples go from fear to joy upon seeing the risen Lord. Then the doubt of Thomas had to be dealt with. Jesus appears the following week, greets them with peace, and invites Thomas to touch His wounds. Thomas utters the marvelous confession, "My Lord and My God!" Jesus says, "You believe because you have seen." Then Jesus our risen Lord and Savior blesses us, "Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe. Then John concludes John 20, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." That sounds like a fitting end this gospel.

But, with Jesus there is never an ending. It true that Jesus won the war with sin, death, and the devil, and the victory has been secured for all believers. But still, we live in a world where many doubt, have questions, and object to the Christian faith. We might be among those who doubt from time to time, and of course there are those questions of faith. We too might ask after experiencing that grand celebration of Easter asking, "Now What?" Well, the mission is still there.

So it was for the disciples, seven of Jesus' disciples experiencing Easter asking, "Now What?" Peter says, "Let us go fishing." And they do, Seven of them in that fishing boat, in the darkness of early morning with gentle waves lapping up against the boat. For Peter, James, and John it is back to what is familiar, the old life before Jesus reached out to them with the invitation, "Follow Me." The others join them because there is nothing else to do.

As the first light of morning begins to appear they are about one hundred yards offshore and fishing, casting their nets catching nothing. Then it happens. On the shore, far enough away not making out who it is, calls out, "Children, do you have any fish?" The voice travels across the water as if He is very close. How often had they been asked, "How is the fishing?" And They answer not so good."

Often times the conversation ends right there. But this one does not end. Then the voice says, "Try on the other side of the boat and you will find some." Looking at one another thinking how does a few feet difference from one side of the boat to the other will make? But they do. And before they know the net is full of fish.

Others jump up trying to help bring in the catch but there are so many that they cannot even lift the net.

Suddenly it dawns on one disciple, the one Jesus loved, "It's the Lord!" For Peter this had to bring back memories where he was part of a big catch of fish which was a result of Jesus' instruction to cast in deep water. That time Peter knelt before the Jesus saying, "Go away for I am a sinful man!" That was before Easter. Jesus did not go away but told Peter that he would learn to fish for people.

This is after Easter and Peter has already experienced the peace that God's forgiveness brings with the appearance of the risen Lord. Peter Jumps in the water and swims the one hundred yards toward Jesus. At the same time the others in the boat bring a net full of fish dragging it alongside the boat.

When they arrive on shore it is Jesus with bread and grilling fish on a charcoal fire for breakfast. Maybe that brought another memory. Fish and bread to feed them just like the five thousand were fed with five loaves and two fish. And the net bulging full of fish? 153 of them and the net is not even torn! This net is able to hold as many fish as it will catch and there will be room for more.

Jesus takes the bread and gives these seven disciples breakfast and He did so with the fish. They did not dare ask Jesus if was really Him because the one who stirred the coals and handed them breakfast were the same nail scarred hands of the crucified and risen Jesus.

Jesus is the risen one from the dead and now lives. He has overcome death, the sin that leads to death, and the devil that causes sin. Yet here He is, the risen Lord, God's servant feeding his disciples. The Good Shepherd feeding His sheep.

The risen Lord after His Victory continues to serve so that His people may come to Him and eat. And in eating they may see His wounds which speak of the peace of forgiveness He has won for you and me, and the welcome He gives to sinners.

One Particular sinner for whom our Lord has great plans for is Peter. Peter who was so full of confidence and love for His Lord, and willing to stand by His Lord

even unto death, still needs to be built up and sent. Jesus singles Him out after breakfast. Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" One for each denial by a charcoal fire in the courtyard of the High Priest during Jesus trial. Then Peter had the chance to say, "Yes I know Jesus, Yes I am a Christian," and prove his love and loyalty to Jesus, but failed. And now Jesus our savior of second chances gives Peter another opportunity to say Yes Lord, I love you.

I wonder How many times how Peter had longed to say those words since that night in the High Priest's Courtyard? It had to be a hard one for Peter to let go of. In fact, it is a denial of the one you love that you cannot let go of until it is the relationship fully restored. Jesus is doing just that. Asking the gracious question, "Do you love me?" to sinners like Peter, to you and me. It is a question so filled with grace, forgiveness, and acceptance that the net that holds back the tears is going to burst. Forgiveness and acceptance that restores the relationship with the ones we love and the one who loves us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember it was not Peter's Love for Jesus that restored the relationship fully, it was the Lord Jesus Christ's love for Peter, for you and me that does that work.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, The Holy Spirit has caught you in that Gospel net and brought us to our crucified and risen Lord to eat the meal He has prepared for us. Here forgiveness is given, and relationship is restored fully.

We who have been fed need not ask, "Now What?" After the grand Easter celebration. Our Risen Lord sends us out like a net. Have not you noticed that a net looks like a bunch of crosses connected. We the baptized, marked with the cross of Christ are that connected net sweeping through this community as go to work in various places to invite others with words of the Lord's first invitation, "Come and See." We have been chosen for something. For Peter it was to feed the sheep and lambs. For you and me To be the Christian Hope that the Resurrection gives to others who live without hope. He chooses us not because we are great, but because your Savior is great! He is always working forgiving, always loving, and always blessing, so we might bless others. So, the story of the Easter Gospel has not come to an end. So may Easter continue with you and me.