

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

I think the disciples must have been from Minnesota. Jesus has appeared twice to his disciples, Thomas has confessed Jesus as “My Lord and my God!” Jesus has breathed the Holy Spirit upon his disciples and he has sent them as the Father has sent him. So where do they go? They go fishing!

So how often are our own lives like this? We celebrated Easter Sunday just a couple weeks ago, Christ is risen, death is defeated, life triumphant, death, sorrow, sin do not have the last word. We have been given a commission by the Risen Christ to go and make disciples of all people. You and I believe without having seen, saved by grace through faith, and now that the celebration of Easter is past, we go back to life as we’ve always lived it. You and I have received the Holy Spirit in our baptisms, yet we still doubt, or at any rate, live like we doubt. Sure, our faith tells us everything is changed, but you know, it’s so much easier to go back to the life we know, it’s so much easier to just go fishing.

And that’s where the disciples are this morning. They’ve spent the night fishing with nothing to show for it. Might that statement summarize our lives? “nothing to show for it!” We try to measure up but we have nothing to show for it, we’re standing there with empty hands, empty nets.

And there on the shore is Jesus, asking us “Children, you have no fish, do you?” He already knows the answer, he already knows our pain, our frustration, our failure, Jesus is always there when and where we hurt the most, even when it’s our own fault. “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some,” Jesus says. Nothing like a backseat fisherman or one on the beach giving advice to the really knowledgeable. None of us like unsolicited advice, especially when we’re told to do the opposite of what we’ve been doing. We want to be in control. But we’re not and Jesus wants us to depend upon him, he wants us to be faithful, success on our terms is irrelevant. We know what we need but the truth is, we don’t, and Jesus knows what we need.

I can imagine the disciples sighing, rolling their eyes, pulling the net up and putting it on the other side of the boat. Oops! Too many fish, 153 large fish to be precise, they’re unable to haul in the nets! Now if we can step outside of ourselves for a moment, we will find as we follow Jesus and his commands, that the world will be caught up in the gospel, in the net of the gospel. God will do this through you and me and his church of which we are a part.

As we look at the man on the shore, why we find that it’s the Lord, and we jump right in, cleansed through baptism, grace give to us though we don’t deserve it, cleansed by our Lord. We find a charcoal fire and bread, fish already cooking prepared by our Lord.

You know, last time Peter was at a fire, he denied ever knowing Jesus, now they sit on the beach at a charcoal fire. So we sit there as well, perhaps pondering the question "what do we do now?"

We've celebrated Easter, in fact we still are since we in the Season of Easter, and every Sunday is a little Easter. We've eaten of the Lord's Supper, and suddenly we hear the question, addressed to Peter, but also addressed to each of us? "Do you love me more than these?" Jesus took our sins, our death upon himself, forsaken from the Father on our behalf, Jesus who feeds us every Sunday with his body and blood.

"Yes Lord; you know that I love you" we answer Jesus. "Feed my lambs" we hear in response, the little ones in our family, those new to the faith who are in our family, the vulnerable and the broken here in our family. Love them, feed them, give yourselves to them. Share Jesus' love with those around us. Then we hear it again, "Do you love me?" "Yes Lord, you know that we love you" we say, then Jesus responds "Tend my sheep". Love those in the flock and those who aren't yet in the flock. Feed my lambs, tend my sheep!

We hear it the third time "Do you love me?" Maybe this time it hurts a bit, but we answer "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you." Then "feed my sheep" with the words of the gospel, with the words of love and hope, with actions of love and hope, welcome others to the shore, those who have caught nothing and are hungry, naked, thirsty. Come to the shore and eat of the meal prepared by the Lord himself, given by the Lord himself who gives himself for us, come to the shore and eat and drink. Then go out and feed Jesus' lambs, tend his sheep, feed his sheep.

AMEN