

April 8, 2018
#21
Life Giving Table
Breakfast is ready.

John 21: 1-14

21 Later, Jesus himself appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how it happened: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus^[a]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter told them, "I'm going fishing."

They said, "We'll go with you." They set out in a boat, but throughout the night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus.

⁵ Jesus called to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?"

They answered him, "No."

⁶ He said, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

So they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn't haul in the net. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren't far from shore, only about one hundred yards.

⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you've just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter got up and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. Yet the net hadn't torn, even with so many fish. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

What a beautiful Sunday to meet. I am a very lucky woman because of many reasons. One of them is because I am in this church and surrounded by so many gifted people. Even if my sermon is not so good, singing, playing and leading is done so well it covers my shortcomings. I am so glad to be able to share with you today our journey with the risen Christ.

I believe that Easter is not like an anniversary or birthday. No! Easter is a life we live. It is a life we choose for everyday. It is so good to have so many people on Easter but true blessing is when we gather in the risen Christ's name many times after Easter.

As I warned you earlier we are not finished with Life Giving Table. We are not finished with the food – the true food for our souls. We eat everyday but so rarely do we use the table to grow in Christ and feed our souls. In our passage today Jesus again shows his mercy, his forgiveness, his realness and his purpose for us after eating together with his disciples. It happens around food and around people.

No credit where credit is due.

“Later Jesus appeared to his disciples. This is how it happened. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples were together. I wonder why these two had no names? Why did John decide not to name them? I can guess that one is John himself? How about other? How would you like to find out that in the greatest story ever told your friends are named but you are just one of two others.

You were there. You participated. You were as good or maybe even better than the others, but now you are known as just two others.

It reminds me of the story, when Andrew and I co -pastored the church in Lithuania. We both decided that in that church I will work with youth, children, do all the administration, all the council meetings and so on. Andrew will take care of Sunday leading worship service. So we did that. In the end of our ministry, at the farewell, we received appreciation gifts. Andrew got flowers and got a very nice gift to remember. I was standing there and smiling not with the most sincere smile. I was hurt. I wanted to say so much some sort of “sharp” phrase, but I kept silent. My name was not there. It helped me to grow in humility, self control and letting it go. True, that on the way home I shared my feelings with Andrew. He thought it was funny.

God does know our names and knows us. God knows all about what we are doing, thinking and feeling. So take courage to continue to be in the story even if you are not getting much credit.

Going back to the old

Simon Peter and six other guys had already seen the Risen Christ, as we read it at the end of this chapter, (verse 14): “This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead”. So they, for sure, knew what happened. They are having trouble absorbing the realities. Like many of us. We come to celebrate Easter, but what do we do the next day, the next week? How much of our life

is changed? We just go back to our lives. It is not so surprising when you think about it. The disciples chose to go back to fishing. They did not know what to do about the news. They did not know what to do with this new reality.

Peter says: "I'm going fishing". The others say, "Alright, so are we." That is exactly what they did. They had a bad night. They did not catch a single fish all night. I bet there is frustration. We know what it is like to have no luck in life. Jesus called them out of their "normal" life, they left everything and they followed him. They believed, they saw miracles and then Jesus, their friend, their lord and rabbi, is crucified, dead and buried. They all betrayed him.

After all they had believed, after all they had trusted, after everything they gave it and it did not work out. They are more than confused. Those women telling them that He is risen, the empty tomb, Jesus coming into a locked room twice. What a crazy story. Finally they even cannot do what they do what they used to do before all this craziness: No fish. After the empty night, with empty nets, when sun comes up, comes the voice.

I'm hungry. Anything to eat?

In CEB translation, Jesus says: "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" But as much I was trying to get the best translation for what is in Greek, I would translate: "Hey there, you don't have any fish, do you?" It brings a smile to my face. I love Jesus. I really do. He is not giving up on us. He has a sense of humor. His love is above all other things. He gave His life for them and for us – you and me. So it is truly sweet to just come back to these disciples, professionals who cannot achieve. Maybe they lost their touch. What is their calling in life?

He could have sent a storm on their boat and given them lightening or a booming voice from heaven. He could have found some other people to sit around with. He comes to all those who messed up, those who turned away and did not believe. He comes to those who try to follow Him, but just don't get it all.

"Hey, there, do you have any food?" Well, these would not be my words to somebody who said they do not recognize me after all that I did for them. But Jesus looks not the past, but the future. Jesus uses the present time to build up the future presenting new possibilities. "Hey, there, do you have any food?" The answer is "no."

The resurrection is real. The body is real. Leave your boat. Have breakfast with Jesus.

First of all, I think Jesus is saying, I am alive. I am hungry. I am not a ghost. My body was crucified. Now, my body is raised from death. As real my crucifixion was, the reality is the resurrection.

Jesus shows that he is the Son of God, the one who has power over the whole world. He leads them to experience that again. He tells them to throw the nets to the other side. They have déjà vu. Yes, they have heard it before, they have experienced it before. John says to Peter: "It's Lord" Peter jumps in the water. We hear nothing about why he did so. There is not a word that he swam fast, that he ran to Jesus – not a word about why and nothing about what he did after he jumped in the water.

I think some of us also are very quick to meet Jesus and some of us it takes a longer time. Maybe some of us jump in the water to avoid meeting Jesus? Some of us get wet and some of us come slowly in the boat to Jesus. I believe Peter felt guilty, ashamed, not worthy. Jesus' words from John chapter 3 come to my mind: "I came not to condemn the world, but to save the world." "Come and have a breakfast". Listen to verse 13: Jesus came, took the bread, gave it to them. Today Jesus meets us at the table again. This first Sunday after Easter we are called to come at the table. Jesus calls us out of the emptiness and darkness. Jesus calls us to come at the table. He is living and we meet Him at the table. He has prepared it for us. Are you ready to leave your boat to come and eat with Jesus?

A breakfast with Jesus breaks down barriers and fills the emptiness

Second, we can break all the walls if we sit around the table and share food. We have Jesus with us. Jesus already prepared the breakfast. Isn't that powerful? Jesus prepares the food for us. It is all prepared. Yes, it is all done. You have to leave your past behind, even if you had done it many times, and came back many times to your old habits, your old ways of living and going. There is a call for you today. Your nets are empty, your life is empty. But there is a voice as the sun comes up.

This voice is a loving voice: Hey there, not getting much out of your life? Frustrated again? Busted again? Come to the shore and sit down with me. Let's have breakfast.

When did all disciples know for sure that this is the Lord? As they came closer to Jesus? As they sat next to Him. "None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord" Are you at a distance from the Lord? Maybe seeing him somewhere far away? Do you want to know Him? To see Him? To enjoy His close company? Come close to Him. Stop resisting and analyzing, bring your heart to Him. Trust your life to Him.

Feed my sheep

Third, Jesus wants us to be different. He has a mission for us. Jesus knows we cannot do it without Him, without being in a close relationship with Him, we cannot do it without first abiding in Him. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch cannot produce fruit by itself, but must remain in the vine. Likewise, you can't produce fruit unless you remain in me".

In the next 5 verses we hear what our life would look like if we love Jesus. After we have meal with Him, after we have been reassured of His love for us, Jesus says: Feed my sheep. He is talking about food again. Is he talking about food for our bodies? Food for our souls? I would suggest both. We gather around the table to eat, to have fellowship, share the gospel and feed our souls and those around the table. Receive an invitation for yourself today. Be the one, who lives as Easter is today again.