

SERMON: "Jesus Feeds and Guides" – April 28, 2010  
Text: John 21:1-19

Here we are again listening to another Easter story. Isn't Easter over yet? The answer is simple and very clear. No. This is where today's Gospel lesson comes in. Let me explain. Most scholars believe that Chapter 21, in John, is an added story. Some believe a student of John may have added this story later. However, if it is an added story it was added at the original writing. Scholars and researchers have never found other manuscripts without chapter 21.

Possibly this wild fishing story has a purpose, more than just an added story. It tells us that Easter continues. Yes this Easter story has lesson for us on how we continue living as disciples of the risen Jesus Christ. Let's explore this story, that only comes up in the lectionary once every three years.

We find the disciples going about what is most familiar to them, fishing. They fish all night. Doing what they know to be successful in catching fish. But alas, after fishing all night, they caught no fish. I'm sure they were frustrated about this. They can't even do what they were taught to do for a living, fish.

The risen Lord appears to them again. The disciples see a man on the shore but they do not recognize him. This stranger calls to them from the shoreline and tells them to throw their nets on the right side. He seems like he knows what he is talking about so they do what he suggests. Then the fish, O the fish, fill the nets. It is the mother load of a catch. Then John recognized that it is the Risen Lord on the shore that directed them to this gold mine fishing event. Not the dead Jesus, but the Jesus who was resurrected from the grave.

I believe the lesson for the disciples and for us today is that we are to do work toward the future, and not the past. The disciples weren't to follow the guide of their past teachers on fishing. They were to be guided by their teacher the risen Christ. His instructions take them into the future. Fishing into waters that make no sense at all. I'm sure they fished on that side of the boat during the night. So telling them to fish on the other side didn't make logical sense. But something told them inside to follow this man's instructions.

That is what their lives were going to be like. Did it make sense to tell the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gentiles? These strange waters that are on the right side, yet was perceived to be on the wrong side according to Jewish belief. So what are the waters that Christ is calling us to put our energy to into fishing? It is not the old ways with the people we feel the most comfortable with. It is with our very diverse neighbors. The focus of the church is not to be about how best to feed us and take care of us. No the fish to catch are on the other side, the right side. The church is to go into familiar yet strange waters and fish. We're guided not by our past, but by our risen Lord for our future. The risen Christ was leading them and us toward our future.

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Peter jumps in the water with his clothes on to meet his risen friend and Lord of All. This scene captures Peter's desire to greet his Lord with proper respect (fully clothed) and his eagerness to greet him immediately. Peter can't constraint his emotions he lets his uncontrolled enthusiasm out for all to see in getting to the Risen Lord first, like the race to the tomb on Easter morning.

Do we see the risen Christ with us? Are we excited to be guided by our risen Lord, as Peter was? Or are we hesitant and afraid? Do we follow the urgings of our Lord within our lives? I hope so for when we do as individuals and as a faith community we will be lead to a new future? We may not know what that future will look like but we will be lead into abundance. The disciples followed the simple but rather strange instructions and they encountered abundance, the abundance of fish.

When we follow our Lord into the future there will be abundance. Remember the promise Jesus gives in John 10:10: "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly." I think this is promise we are experiencing right now. For these past several years, we have be working hard but financially we think we re going to struggle. I have expected to go to  $\frac{3}{4}$  time year after year. However, each year as we faithfully try to carry out our discipleship following our call and our vision of a welcoming, inclusive community that does not only serve ourselves but others in our community we are seeing abundance. We have put in an elevator lift for all people who come into our building and need to use our downstairs, and we paid for it without getting a loan. And this last session meeting we paid back the reserve fund from which we borrowed to pay bills. I see great abundant joy raising in our worship. I see abundance of compassion for those who struggle and are in need within our faith community and outside of it. Yes we see abundance.

Now back to our story. The disciples are invited to eat breakfast. The breakfast was totally provided for them. They did not cook the meal. They did

not even serve themselves. The Risen Lord provided for their food and nourishment.

Jesus feeds us as well. He feeds us with our sacrament of Holy Communion. This is not just bread and juice. It is himself. We do not know how this mystery happens, but it occurs. He feeds us through the Word read and spoken in worship and in study. He feeds us in community where he resides we come to share and pray. He feeds us when we use the gifts of our lives for service, whether that be the giving of our singing or playing a musical instrument for God's glory, or giving of our self in service to others. I think one of the dangers of the church and for that matter for the human race, is that we think we can live without our God, Jesus Christ. We can follow our own leading. We do not come to worship or small group meetings, because we think we don't need it. We do need it! In fact our spiritual life depends on it!!!!

Now will this journey always be happy and easy! No! We are reminded of this fact in Jesus' interaction with Peter. We do not choose our vocation as disciples. Jesus does. What does that discipleship entail? Well, Jesus declares it for the church. You shall feed my lambs, tend my sheep, and feed my sheep. All the Lord's lambs and sheep in our community and outside, even those who are lost. The disciples then and today (us) are called to live dependant on the risen Lord to proclaim the gospel that may take us through scary times. As we go through them, our Lord is with us, and empowers us to live on.

Where in your life has the risen Lord been present calling out to you to be in ministry that makes no sense? Where in your life do you fear and try to control things back to the old way of living? My advice is to give the control up to God and let it be. In this letting Jesus guide and feed us we will be cast into a future of abundance. Maybe not material abundance, but in spiritual abundance that leads others and us to jump into the waters to meet our risen Lord. Yes, Easter continues today.