

Sermon for Easter III Year C 2025

When life gets difficult, when we become lost, confused, and afraid, when the changes of life are not what we wanted or think we deserve, we tend to run away.

We try to go back to the way it was before—
to something safe, something familiar.

Often, we revert to old patterns of behavior and thinking.
Even when we know better and do not want to go backwards,
it seems easier than moving forward.

Peter and six other disciples have returned to the sea.

They have left Jerusalem.

They have come home to the Sea of Tiberias,
the place where it all began—

where Jesus called them the first time to follow him.

Discipleship, the upper room, the cross, the empty tomb,
the house with its locked doors are some 80 miles to the south.

Peter decides to go fishing.

He knows how to do that.

It is familiar and comfortable.

Perhaps it takes him back to life before Jesus.

The others are quick to join him.

My hunch, however, is that Peter is not really trying to catch fish
as much as he is fishing for answers.

We can leave the places and even the people of our life,
but we can never escape ourselves or our life.

Wherever you go . . . there you are.

Peter may have left Jerusalem

but he cannot get away from three years of discipleship, the last supper,
the arrest, a charcoal fire in the courtyard, denials and a crowing rooster.

He cannot leave behind the cross, the empty tomb,
the house with the doors locked tight, the echoes of “peace be with you.”
So he fishes.

Peter fishes for answers.
What have I done?
What were those three years about?
Who was Jesus?
Where is he?
Who am I?
What will I do now?
Where will I go?
What will happen to me? To us?
Peter is searching for meaning, a way forward, a place in life.
Peter is dark night fishing.

We have all spent time dark night fishing—
asking the same questions as Peter,
seeking to make some sense of meaning or understanding
when everything seems to be going oh so wrong,
seeking peace in a world hellbent on violence and division.
You could say the letter we call Revelation was written to seven
churches made up of people who felt just like Peter.
They, too, were dark-night fishing.
As I told you last week, their world was a kaleidoscope of calamities
and John knew they needed something to help them through their fear
and confusion.
All people who experience dark-night fishing are in the midst of losses
and sorrows and even failures.
It happens when we come
face to face with the things we have done and left undone,
face to face with things we would not want to have happened for
anything.
Peter, the early church, even the Apostle Paul and us—we have all been
there, fishing for answers in the dark night of the soul.

Children you have no fish, have you Jesus says.
This is more a statement of fact than a question.

Obviously, Jesus is not asking for a fishing report.
He is commenting on the reality and emptiness of Peter's and the other disciples' lives.
Peter is living in the past and the past of Good Friday.
He is fishing on the Good Friday side of the boat and the net is empty.
There are no fish, no answers, no way forward.
The nets of dark night fishing contain nothing to feed or nourish life.

Have you ever wondered if we have been fishing on the wrong side of the boat, too?

Jesus seems to think so . . . *Cast your net to the right side of the boat*

Jesus says, the resurrection side of the boat.

This movement of the net from one side of the boat to the other symbolizes the disciples' resurrection.

It is the great passover.

Jesus calls us to move out of error into truth,
out of sin into righteousness—into wholeness, out of death into life.

In so doing we see and proclaim, "it is the Lord"
along with the beloved disciple.

Emptiness gives way to the abundance of a full net.

Darkness dawns a new day with new light.

A new charcoal fire kindles hospitality
in place of the cold ashes of rejection.

The last supper has become the first breakfast.

Confessions of love overcome denials of fear.

The Lamb who was slain has conquered and is now enthroned.

It is the Lord.

Dark night fishing is over.

This is Easter.

Good Friday is real.

Pain, death, sin . . . are realities of life.

But the greater and final reality is Easter resurrection.

This is the message of the letter of Revelation and why the whole of heaven—the myriads upon myriads and thousands of thousands are singing with full voice—honor and glory and blessing.
Christ is risen!

And now the risen Jesus says, “Follow me.”
Live as resurrected people.
Follow me and put your lives of faith, hope and love
to work in a different way,
a different place.
Follow me.

Follow me is the invitation to Easter living in a Good Friday world.
Revelation pulls back the curtain so we might be able to hear God
clearly over the deafening din of the Good Friday world—
The day is coming when myriads and myriads of angels,
the elders, and all living creatures will sing out in full voice:
You have turned our wailing into dancing,
you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.
Therefore our hearts sing to you without ceasing.
O Lord, our God, we will give you thanks forever.
Alleluia! Christ is risen.
Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!
Amen!