

April 10, 2016
Sermon for Third Sunday of Easter
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
John 21:1-14

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

John 21:1-14 (ESV)

¹ After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. ⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Haven't we been here before? It sounds so familiar. In Luke 5 we hear of the account of a miraculous catch of fish: Luke 5:4–6 (ESV)

⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

But now, about three years have now passed, along with Jesus' recent death and resurrection, and the disciples are on downtime after that rough week in Jerusalem. They're back in Galilee as instructed, waiting, and Peter, who can't seem to sit still, decides to go fishing; the other disciples go with him.

Just like before, the night goes by without a fish in the nets. With daylight, a figure stands on the shore, calls them "children" and asks if they have any food. When they say "no," He tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. Again, an illogical piece of counsel: How is the right side going to differ from the left for catching fish?

But again, the net is full-big fish this time, but even so the net doesn't bust. It's not because they fished on the other side of the boat. It's because the One on the shore spoke His Word and declared to them that they would find fish there.

Who is He? John says it first: *"It is the Lord!"* The risen Jesus is appearing to His disciples again, and no one looks to waste any time-get that boat to shore. For Peter, though, that's not quick enough: He puts His robe back on, jumps in the water and swims for it.

They get to shore and find that the Lord is making breakfast for His hungry disciples. Even though they know who He is, they dare not ask.

Why? Because of who He is.

The hand that stokes the fire and turns the fish has a nail-print through it, for this is He who was crucified for them. This is the Christ who suffered their death and now has defeated the tomb.

He is not sitting on a throne to be worshiped. He's making them breakfast! He's not even speaking to make cooked food appear out of nowhere, but He's grilling fish on a fire.

Jesus is risen from the dead. His time of Humiliation is over, but His humility is not. The Son of God appears to His disciples and provides them with daily bread, giving them breakfast. But that's not all.

Although the Gospel lesson for today stops at verse 14, Jesus does not. He takes Peter aside, and restores him as an apostle. Peter denied Jesus three times; so three times, Jesus tells him once again to feed His sheep. In other words, Jesus doesn't just appear to give Peter fish. He appears to give Peter forgiveness, again and again.

After all, that is why He died. And that is why He is risen.

What has this to do with you and me? Let us begin with some amazing truths regarding our resurrected Lord.

We remember, of course, that He is risen. The Son of God who died in our place, for our sins, is risen again from the dead. This is cause for joy. But to add to that rejoicing is this: Risen from the dead and having conquered all of His enemies, the Lord Jesus Christ still serves. He still provides us with daily bread, and He still gives us the forgiveness of sins. His Humiliation has come to an end.

His humility has not, and the Lord of all continues to be the Servant of all.

Here is even more reason for thanksgiving:

Not only does the Lord provide for us, but He desires that we be with Him. Risen again, He didn't treat the disciples like pigs in a pen, to be fed but kept away from the house. Rather, He summoned them to Himself in order to care for them, just as He does for us today.

Peter, the swimmer, would later write of this truth in his first epistle: *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (I Pet. 2:9-10)*

"You are a royal priesthood," he proclaims; and what do priests do?

They have the privilege of drawing near to God. You have the privilege of drawing near to Him. The Lord wants you in His presence—not just in the future in heaven, but right now. He doesn't want to keep you as distant recipients of His gifts, but calls you to Him now.

And where do you go to draw near to Jesus? You go to where He promises to be found: you go to where His Word is preached and His Sacraments are given out. That's where Jesus is to be found, forgiving your sins. What news! The risen Son of God still draws near to you, to give you forgiveness and life and salvation. He tells you exactly where He does this—in His means of grace.

Having declared this incredible news, we now need to preach some Law against sins which seek to get rid of this truth.

For one thing, we must address the famous theology of the lake: "Since God is everywhere, I don't have to be in church to worship Him. Man, I can be in my fishing boat instead."

Substitute "fishing boat" for "king-size bed" or "super bowl" or whatever else calls out on the weekends. If God is everywhere, why can't we just worship Him everywhere? We might counter with a question from the Gospel lesson: If God is everywhere, then why did Peter swim to shore? Why didn't he just stay in the boat, maybe keep on fishing?

Luther answers this way: It is true that God is everywhere, but He is not everywhere for you. In other words, while God is everywhere, He directs us to certain places for certain gifts.

For instance, imagine someone saying, "Dinner is served inside the restaurant. But since God is everywhere and gives daily bread, I can just sit out here in my car in the parking lot." That's silly, of course; God gives daily bread, and in this case He's providing it inside the restaurant. Even though God is everywhere and gives daily bread, it doesn't mean He's going to deliver it to you in your car.

Where does God give forgiveness? In His means of grace. Wherever His Gospel is preached and His Sacraments administered accordingly, Jesus is there to forgive. If His Gospel is not preached, nor His Sacraments administered accordingly, Jesus is there-but not specifically to forgive sins. He works through means—in this case, His means of grace. If you're casting for bass on Sunday morning, God is there, yes; but not to forgive sins. Now, someone will probably ask, "So, what if I take my Bible along and meditate upon it while I'm fishing?" I haven't seen that a lot when I've been fishing; but hey, it might happen, I can only give you partial credit. You see, Hebrews 10:25 exhorts us to gather together in order to encourage one another, especially as the Last Day approaches. To be off by yourself is to rob others of your presence and the encouragement that your presence provides here. That, however, isn't the main thing: Our point is that our Lord is present in His means of grace to forgive. That is why we draw near to Him.

Enough of that, for it is largely preaching to the choir. If you are hearing this, it means that you're here and not out fishing, hiking, etc., so we leave that for that which applies to us. You've made it here this morning, but why? Is it out of joyful expectation that the risen Lord is here? Or is it merely habit--you came because that's what you do on Sunday morning? Is it because your parents made you come? Is it because you feel like you have to? Are you present in body, but your mind is far away right now? Realistically, we lack the eager desire to be with the Lord and be forgiven.

Peter jumped out of the boat and swam to His Lord; the same Lord is here, yet we fail to be so earnest to be in His presence and be forgiven. If the parking lot were a lake, I venture to guess we wouldn't be all that inclined to wade across it to get here. Now, we can make up all sorts of excuses about burnout or boredom or other things to do, but here is the truth: The same Lord is here to restore you as He restored Peter, and that is reason for joy. Our reasons for not gathering are the work of the Old Adam, our old sinful selves, which most certainly does not want to be anywhere near the Lord and His grace.

Therefore, let us confess our lack of earnestness, our lack of attentiveness and our lack of respect for the risen Son of God who gathers us here—and who is present with us.

The focus of worship is upon the Lord who is present in His means of grace to forgive sins. Because He comes to forgive, we are able to pray and be heard. He gives, and we respond with our petitions and praise. We want to keep Christ and His work of forgiveness central to worship here. We have the privilege of praying to God for the sake of His Son, crucified and risen, at any time; yet when do we pray? Not often out of appreciation for His gifts, but only when we are in need of more. Or, we may find that most of our prayers are table blessings before meals, which we have long since stopped paying attention to. And there sometimes seems to be a dislike for prayers that are already used and printed by someone else, as if truth which has already been spoken before cannot be truth for us anymore.

The risen King of kings humbly makes His ear available to us. The risen Lord stands ready to hear us, as surely as He stood on that shore for Peter; yet we so often fail to make proper use of this gift.

There is a cause for rejoicing this day. Despite our sins, how does the Lord respond to us, His children?

He still comes. He still draws near to us and welcomes us to Him. He still gives daily bread to all, whether they believe in Him or not.

He still offers forgiveness and faith to all, so that all might be forgiven and believe and be saved. He still tells us exactly where He is found with grace, in His Word and in His Sacraments. And by these means of grace, He still has mercy upon us and restores us. Though we come half-heartedly, He does not; He comes with all grace and joy. Though our prayers are lacking, He intercedes for us so that our prayers are answered according to His Father's will.

You see, Christ is risen from the dead. And He who died to restore us to Himself didn't rise again to abandon us. Despite our sinful reluctance to come into His presence for forgiveness, He still comes to us anyway. Thus we give thanks to the Lord for His coming, for His patience, and for His most persistent mercy. And thankful for His persistence, we rejoice to confess our sins and draw near to Him. For here, by His means of grace, the present, risen Lord declares that you are indeed forgiven for all of your sins. So don't try to carry them back home with you today. They are forgiven...not because of any of your actions or worth, but because Christ is risen! He is risen indeed.

Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through the risen Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Sermon Outline

“Jesus is risen from the dead! And?
(John 21:1–14)

- I. What has this to do with you and me?
- II. Where does God give forgiveness?
- III. Despite our sins, how does the Lord respond to us, His children?