

SLIDE 1

Breakfast with Jesus
John 21:1-14
WVPC, April 21, 2024

Last week we heard about Jesus appearing to the disciples – including Thomas – and encouraging them to believe that he really is alive and present with them. He promised us that we who have not seen and yet have believed, are blessed. OK. We believe. We are blessed. Now what? What are we supposed to do with the lives God has given us and has blessed?

The disciples weren't sure about that either. John tells us about what happened when they tried to go back to their old ways of life. Hear now the word of God as it comes to us from John 21:1-14.

SLIDE 2-12

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

⁶He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.^[c] ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Here ends the reading of God's holy word. Join me in saying, Thanks be to God.

Peter and the others knew that Jesus was alive. But, now what do they do? They haven't received any ministry instructions yet. There are still families to support; they have to do something. So when Peter says, "I'm going out to fish," he doesn't mean recreationally. He means professionally. He had been a fisherman when Jesus called him; and he didn't yet know what else he might do with his life. Or what God wanted him to do. So, fishing it was. Six of the other disciples – a majority of those remaining - were in the same situation, and they went along with Peter.

Have you ever been in a situation that is similar to Peter's? When you felt like God wanted you to do something, but you weren't sure what it was, exactly? So you kept on doing whatever it was that you already knew how to do? Like for instance, suppose you were an engineer, and you were really active in your church. And you started sensing that God wanted you to take some time off from your job and go help repair hurricane damage down south. But you don't know where you should go, or who would oversee the project, or who would pay for it. So after awhile you stop thinking about it, and you re-focus your attention on your regular job that you already know. If something like that has ever happened to you, then maybe you can imagine yourself in Peter's position.

At first none of the disciples recognized Jesus standing on the shore, even though we're told that they were close to shore, "about a hundred yards" away. They could hear him calling out to them, right? Yet they didn't recognize who it was, calling out to them. That's consistent with every other time they saw the risen Jesus; they didn't recognize him by his appearance, remember? They recognized him by what he said or did. Here again, they only recognized Jesus when they heard him, did what he said, and saw a miracle happen. It wasn't until they threw the net on the right side of the boat, and caught so many fish that they couldn't haul them into the boat, that one of the disciples recognized Jesus and said, "It is the Lord!" THEN Peter recognized Jesus, jumped in the water, and swam to shore.

I wonder what he and Jesus said to each other, as the other disciples followed in the boat, going slowly because they were towing such a heavy load of fish? Too bad John didn't tell us that!

But here's what we do know: when the disciples landed the boat on the shore, they saw that there was a fire of burning coals, with fish and bread. Where did Jesus get the fish and the bread? We don't know. But we do know that the disciples would have been cold and hungry after working hard all night, being splashed with cold water and blown about by the wind. A warm fire? With cooked food? All provided for them? How would you feel if you'd been in their position? Grateful? Delighted? Overwhelmed, maybe? What a blessing that would have been!

Through the risen Jesus, God warmed them and fed them. I guess we could call it the Lord's Breakfast, because he "took the bread, and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish." Does that remind you of anything? How about, "He took the bread, and after he had given thanks, he gave it to them," and, "In the same way, Jesus took the cup and gave it to them"? Yes, there's some similarity there! He gave his disciples everything they most needed for that moment- just as he has

always given all his disciples, down through the ages, what we most need for the moment, which we receive through the Lord's Supper.

Jesus also gave them the opportunity to contribute some of the fish that he had miraculously provided for them, when he said, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." What they had was Jesus' gift; and sharing that gift with one another and with him made it even more of a blessing than it already was.

Let's focus on the fish and the net for a few minutes, since it was a miracle, and since John focuses his attention on it. We are told repeatedly that there was a large number, of large fish; and John even specifies that there was 153 of those large fish. A whole lot of them, in other words – a multitude of them. We are also told repeatedly about the net – that it was so full of fish that they couldn't haul it into the boat; they had to tow it behind them and then drag the net ashore. Yet even with all that weight and with all that rough handling, the net didn't break! That was every bit as miraculous as the huge haul of fish!

What was all that about? That was a whole lot more fish than what 7 guys would need for breakfast. Especially since Jesus had already provided bread and fish. So what was the point of that miracle? What was Jesus teaching them? Well, remember that when Peter and Andrew, and James and John, were called to be disciples, Jesus told them that they would be fishing for people, right? So this miracle told them that the time had come for them to go and start their own ministries of fishing for people. Lots of people. So many people that it might look like there's no room for all the people. Like how the 153 fish were all crammed into the net.

And, all kinds of people. No distinction among the different kinds of people. Those 153 fish weren't all one species; they were all kinds of swimming things. Just put down the net and bring in as many fish as you possibly can – all types, all sizes. It will be OK. When the disciples were fishing, the net didn't break; God took care of them and preserved the net. In the same way, when they fish for people, they should fish for everyone. Lots of people. No distinction among the different kinds of people – they are to fish for them all. It'll be OK. The disciples won't break, and the church won't break. God will take care of them. It's time for them to go, and put down their nets among people. Which was exactly what they did.

This still applies to us, even though it's been almost 2000 years since the first disciples had breakfast with Jesus. Jesus has brought a multitude of people of all kinds to himself. His disciples down through the ages have thrown out their nets to bring people into the church, and into relationship with Jesus. Right now, in 2024, Christianity is the largest religion in the world, and has been for the last hundred years. Currently 2.4 billion people throughout the world identify as Christian, according to Wikipedia. That's a lot of fish, right? And yet the net has not broken. One way or another, the net of Christian community can hold everyone.

We may not find it very easy to talk about Jesus with other people. We may not be very outgoing. It doesn't matter. Jesus gives us what we need. He gave a nice warm breakfast to the disciples, right? He also gives us what we need - places to live, food to eat, and faith to share. If we are Jesus' disciples – and we are – then we're called to throw out the net. Even if we're not

professional fishermen, we're called to throw out the net. Even if we're not as strong as we once were, and can't throw that net very far, we're still called to try.

That's why we are hosting and supporting the West Valley Neighborhood Church, and supporting Caitlin and Joel's efforts to make connections with local people in their 30s and 40s. The open mikes have started; the co-working space is almost ready; and Caitlin and Joel will be working with Area Youth Ministry in May and part of June to reach out to the Hyde kids. That's also why we do things like rent out our sanctuary to the Saratoga Symphony – so we can make connections with older people and help them get to know us. (Which, BTW, the next concert is on May 5th; if you're available, I could use some help at the welcome table.) The net of Christianity is strong enough to hold everyone, in Cupertino, in the Bay Area, in California, in America, in the world - because Jesus makes it so.

In John 12:32, Jesus says, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Jesus has drawn us to himself. Let's pray for all the other people that Jesus is drawing to himself.

Almighty God, we thank you with all our hearts that Jesus is present in our midst, by the power of your Holy Spirit. As he gave his disciples all that they needed on that cold early morning, may he remind us now of all that he has given to us over the years. Remind us of his constant faithfulness and his steadfast presence within us and among us. Grant us the openness to hear what Jesus says to us, and the vision to see what he is doing, that we may join him with joy and gladness. Help us to cast the nets you have given us, and draw others to him. We pray for Caitlin and Joel Rhodes-Karahadian as they build networks and draw younger people closer to him as well. We pray that the churches on this corner would grow; that the churches throughout our cities would grow; that the churches throughout our state and our country would grow; that the churches throughout the world would grow – that all would be drawn into your love and mercy. For it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.