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## The Third Sunday of Easter May 1, 2022

### **The Resurrected Lord Comes to Enlighten and Excite**

The days after Easter were quiet as Jesus' followers contemplated what the resurrection would mean for their lives. As they relaxed on a fishing trip, Jesus showed up. A miracle brought to mind his power and their future ministry, and a meal over a fire reminded them of his friendship and love. Jesus, give us such light and joy!

### **Sermon John 21:1-14**

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "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. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He 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.

Then 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. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So 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. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Introduction – My wife Brenda is retiring this month after teaching piano lessons for 45 years. For 33 of those years she's taught children at Calvary and Christ Alone School. Her last piano recital is next Tuesday. It's kind of a notable event. From what I hear the school is doing something special and our sons and their families are coming.

What's been a little strange over the past few weeks is that thinking about Brenda's retirement has made me think about my own piano teacher. Her name was Matilda Mattern and I hadn't thought about her in years. She lived at 620 Broad St. in Menasha and for seven years my friend Tim and I biked to her house every Saturday morning for our lessons. It makes me smile to think how different Mrs. Mattern taught piano lessons compared to Brenda's teaching, but I guess the objective was pretty much the same: teach the kids to learn the language of music.

I don't usually tell personal stories in the pulpit, but this story is so similar to what happens in the Gospel for today that I couldn't resist. In today's Gospel you heard St. John tell about a miracle that Jesus performed a few weeks after Easter. It's a miracle that has to do with fish and it takes place in a fishing boat. It's the main event for the Third Sunday of Easter; I could have based my sermon today just on this event. But you can't hear about this miracle—and I'm sure the apostles felt the same—you can't hear about this miracle without thinking instantly of another miracle that had to do

with fish and a fishing boat. St. Luke wrote down the first fishing boat story and it happened two and half years before the second. It's amazing how similar the two miracles are, but it's just as amazing at how different they are. And what makes them different is that the first one happened before Easter and the second one happened after Easter.

What we want to see this morning is how Easter—and, of course, I mean the resurrection of Jesus—how it changes the way we think and act in our lives. The two fishing boat miracles are almost exactly the same, but what the apostles discovered and how they reacted are very different. So this is the point today:

### **Life Changes at a Fishing Boat**

And we'll ask: What do we discover and how do we react?

1. For more than two years the apostles had been with Jesus almost every day. This changed after the resurrection. Jesus wasn't always around and his resurrected body enabled him to come and go without being seen. So the apostles didn't have much to do. They were close to the Sea of Galilee up north and one day Peter decided to take the cover off one of his old fishing boats and troll the lake. **"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out**—there were seven of them—**and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.** They usually fished at night so the fish couldn't see the sun reflecting on the linen nets. Didn't seem to help this time. John tells us what happened. **Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He 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.** John figured this out instantly. He said to Peter, **It is the Lord!** When they saw Jesus on the shore, no one recognized him, but the miracle in the fishing boat changed all that. First John, then Peter, then the rest. They didn't need to ask. John tells us, **they knew it was the Lord.** This wasn't a stranger. This was the man who visited them twice in the last week. This was the man who died and rose again; this was the man they loved and followed.

For John, it must have been *déjà vu*. Been there; done that. Jesus was starting his ministry and he had four followers; Peter and John were among them, both fishermen. One day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee Jesus was teaching and using one of Peter's boats as a pulpit. Luke tells us this story: **When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon** (that's Peter), **"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.** Before the miracle, Peter called Jesus *master* or *leader*; after the miracle Peter called Jesus *Lord* or *Messiah*. The fishing boat changed everything. Peter had discovered something. This was the man John the Baptist pointed to, this was the man who would be the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. So what do we have? Two fishing boats and both led Jesus' apostles to discover who he really was: The Lord.

I was never much into fishing. If I did step into a fishing boat, I was glad not to catch anything; I didn't like taking the fish off the hook. But for real fishermen, empty nets mean failure and maybe the collapse of the business. If the lakes go dead, the empty nets mean starvation and death. That I can understand. Without Jesus, our nets are always empty. All our efforts to get away from sin fail. All our hopes for life with God collapse. Without the Bread of life and the Water of life, our souls starve and we would drown in the polluted waters of hell.

For the apostles, life changed at a fishing boat. Of course, Jesus doesn't do miracles in fishing boats anymore. 153 squirming, struggling fish don't change us like they changed the apostles. What changes us is the miracle we see in the Savior's good news. Sometimes we think the Bible is nothing more than a bunch of facts: Jesus did this and Jesus did that. But the gospel is so much more. The good news about Jesus is more than information; the gospel is power. Jesus showed his power in those fishing boats and that power led the apostles to discover that he was more than their master and more than a stranger on the shore. Jesus was the Lord, the Son of God, the promised Savior, the Lamb of God. And that's what we discover through the power of the gospel. St. Paul wrote, **I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.** That gospel power has led you and me to believe that Jesus was not only born, but that he is the Word made flesh; that he didn't only live, but that he lived to replace our imperfect lives with his; that he didn't only die but that he died to pay the penalty for our sin. That same gospel power

has convinced us that Jesus lives—impossible I know—but the tomb was empty, the body was gone, and Jesus is alive! And life changes right there!

2. That first fishing boat also belonged to Peter. When he saw the fabulous catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, **“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man.”** The fishing boat made Peter realize that Jesus was much more than his master; he was confused and intimidated and afraid. The other disciples felt the same: **they were astonished**; their jaws dropped. Very different with this fishing boat. **As soon as Simon Peter heard John say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.** At the first fishing boat, Peter couldn't get far enough away from Jesus. At the second, he couldn't get close to Jesus fast enough. The others weren't as impetuous as Peter, but **they followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.** I have to believe they all had smiles on their faces.

You know what made the difference, of course. They had walked and talked with Jesus for over two years. They heard his sermons and saw his miracles. They knew he was the Lord but they were still confused on Good Friday; except for John, they all ran and Peter denied. In a lot of ways they were still afraid and astonished. But the resurrection changed everything. The confusion, the doubt, the fear— it was all gone. At this fishing boat they reacted to Jesus with eager and reckless joy. Their Lord was alive. **Come and have breakfast**, Jesus said. And so they sat down with him in happy friendship. Only a few days would pass before Jesus appointed them as his witnesses in the world, and they would follow his call into the world with the same determined joy. Only a few weeks later Peter said, **“We cannot help but speak what we have seen and heard.”**

That's what Jesus' power does. He doesn't display his power in fishing boats anymore. His power is in the gospel. Jesus said, **My words are Spirit and they are life.** The Holy Spirit fills the good news with power and that power has a life-changing effect on us. We fight against sin now, we don't fear death now, we look forward to being close to the Bible now, we love to love one another now and we love to share the good news with others. In the good news about Jesus we have discovered that Jesus is Lord—our Lord, our Savior, our Friend. We believe that he lived and died and rose to save us and make us different people. And so we react to him with eager and excited joy. Our fishing boat is here in the gospel; its power is obvious. Our nets are full. We join Jesus in happy and laughing togetherness over the campfires of our lives and then we carry the bright flame of the gospel into our neighborhoods, our families, and the world. Amen.