

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend David J. Powers
Sunday, May 1, 2022

John 20:1-18

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 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.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to 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 there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone

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else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

So, in some ways, beloved, this is a story about weariness. The disciples have experienced all of the ups and downs of holy week together, and they have now seen Jesus twice after he has been raised from the dead. Yet they are worn out tired.

They have you imagine spent a lot of time together trying to figure out what's next. What they are to do. That sort of contemplation, trying to figure out what we are to do next, that can be exhausting. That can be exhausting work to wrestle with, especially when you're doing it in a group. Trying to do group processing can be tiring. Simon Peter says to the other disciples gathered on the shore that day I'm going fishing, and they say we'll come with you. When we are tired and when we are weary, we often default back to the way that we used to be. When we are tired and worn down, doing something brand new can seem even more exhausting to contemplate. So, instead we fall back to the way that things were, and so Peter and the other disciples do that. They hop into boat, and they go out and they spend the night fishing. If we're honest with ourselves, we know the weariness that they have experienced. We have seen the resurrection indeed, but we also know what it means to be bone tired weary. Some of us know what weariness looks like from staying up all night with a colicky newborn. Some of us know what weariness feels like from sleeping on the sofa in a hospital room of a parent. Some of us know weariness from holding vigil by the bedside of a spouse. Some of us know weariness from another failed attempt at sobriety. Others know weariness from relationships and another one not working out like we expected. Still others know the weariness of yet another round of chemo, and then some know the weariness of yet another change.

The weariness of the disciples is known to us even this day with whatever burden we have carried to this place. It is known to the world as well, and when we are weary, we often fall back to the way things used to be. That's what they've done. They've gone fishing. They were fishermen long before they were followers of Jesus Christ. They have fallen back into their old ways. This story, in some ways, is about weariness, but this story is also about remembering this mysterious figure on the shore who says have you caught anything knowing the answer before he asked.

No. Cast your nets on the other side. There's a catch there and even as he gives that instruction there is remembering. There must be. Just a few months ago, we read the text where the disciples as they are being called have fished all night and

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they've come up empty. This man that they don't fully know encourages them to go out into the deeper water and cast once again. In that time, they get so many fish in their net they got to call another boat because theirs starts sinking and then there's two nets full of fish and they pull them in the second. This mysterious figure on the beach says to them cast the net on the other side. This story, we understand, is about remembering. Remember when you fished all night and came up empty. Remember who met you that morning in your weariness.

Later when they pull those nets ashore, they find this charcoal fire with just fish and bread being grilled on it there.

They must be thinking, one of them has to say, we've seen this before. Last time we saw there were five loaves and a couple fish, and we had no idea that we could feed 5 000 people with that amount of food. It's as if the figure that they don't fully know in their midst is saying do you remember when you thought you didn't have enough but you had plenty for everyone.

He says to Peter as he gathers around and takes a seat around that fire. It's interesting. Jesus tells him to go and grab some fish from the net the net that he's abandoned.

When he's jumped naked into the sea. We're not going to dive too deep into that part of Peter's night of fishing. We don't get that part, but he's the last one ashore and he's the last one to the fire. When he gets to the fire, we think to ourselves, the story has to be about remembering. The last time we saw Peter around a charcoal fire, he was warming himself as Jesus was moving through the passion. The last time we saw Peter around the charcoal fire he was denying the Savior that he had walked with for three years. The last time we saw Peter he was seeking security as he watched his Savior suffer.

The story is about remembering so that the disciples might be reoriented to the new thing that has already come. Let me say that again. This story is about remembering what was so that we might be reoriented to the new thing that we are.

If this story is about weariness and if it's about remembering, then it's also about seeing with new eyes because that's what happens to the disciples around the fire. Scripture tells us that there is this awkward thing at the table that morning. If you ever had an awkward meal, maybe with your family or friends seated around the table, the elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about is right there with you. That's what happens on the beach that day. They all knew it was Jesus , but nobody dared ask if it was actually him. That's the air on the seashore that day.

They needed to see with new eyes who he was in their midst. Some would question whether this breakfast of fish and bread constitutes communion. It probably wouldn't be ordained as such by the greater church, but I can't imagine it's anything else.

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The next time that Jesus has a meal with his disciples after he has instituted the one that we will celebrate this day, the fish and the bread are stand-ins for the elements of the universe which always communicate the incarnate presence of God.

So, this day it'll be cup and bread and that morning it was fish and bread. Rachel Held Evans tells us this is the purpose of the sacraments of the church. They help us see and point us to the bread and the wine or the fish, the orchids and the food pantries and the post-funeral potlucks and the post-communion dance parties and say pay attention. This stuff matters. These things are holy.

So that morning on that beach so many years ago, the disciples got to sit and be reminded of the holiness in the ordinary work of simply sitting around table together.

If the story is about weariness and if this story is about remembering and if this story is about having new eyes, then this story is really at its core about grace.

The call of this story to each of us this day is to see what Bob Goff encourages us to see. When Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't make a speech. He didn't preach a long sermon to him. He simply made his friends breakfast and sat in the sand and shared bread and a little fish and that was enough.

Grace meets the disciples as they've fallen back into their old way of being on that seashore that day and has a fire for them to get warm and prepare some food.

Grace meets the disciples where they are but is not content to leave them there . That's is at least a part of what Anne Lamott is trying to communicate to each of us when she says **I do not understand the mystery of grace. Only that it meets us where we are and does not leave it leave us where it found us.**

So, this day. beloved .in our weariness from being seated in that hospital room or from that other round of chemo or from one more change that we have had to navigate together. may we remember the places of connection and the ways in which God has been at work in this community and in our lives. May we also have a vision to see the new thing that God is doing to welcome grace in our midst in the form of Christ Jesus. Maybe around this table or maybe around the potluck table later today, we might know that Christ doesn't have a prophetic word to preach to us this day necessarily, but simply offers his presence and a meal. It turns out that for us, just like for the disciples, that's enough. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. One God, Mother of us all. Amen.