

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Reverend David J. Powers

Sunday, May 3, 2026

Let's get comfy in our pews. Maybe close our eyes, take our prayer posture, whatever that is, and let's take a couple deep breaths together. Okay? So, let's take a deep breath in

and breathe it out slowly.

Another deep breath in, and breathe it out slowly. Breathe in God's mercies,

and breathe out God's mercies to others. Breathe in God's mercies and breathe out God's mercies to others.

Gracious spirit, you are as close to us as our very next breath. And so we pray that you would dwell within us and around us in these moments. That you would quiet any voice within us but your own. That we might hear your word for us this day and that in hearing we might be called to lead lives of response. So may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you, God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

The Gospel of John.

After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberius. And he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other 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?" And 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 his outer garment, for he had taken it off, 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. And Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore full of large fish, 153 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.

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our Lord endures forever. Amen.

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So, in the 1980s, there was this movie production technique. It was first utilized by Smokey and the Bandit, that franchise. It was known as the postscript. Smokey and the Bandit used it for bloopers and outtakes, Naked Gun for extra jokes. If you went to a movie in a theater and you stayed for the entirety of the credit run, the producers of a movie would give you a little extra nugget, a postscript. So, it would be bloopers or outtakes or extra jokes. For Toy Story in 1995, they utilized the postscript as well. But of course that being an animated feature, they had to create something. So they made...created bloopers and outtakes for the Toy Story family. One of the most famous was with one of my favorite movies, Ferris Bueller's Day Off. The crowd stays late for that 1986 movie because postscripts have become very popular. And so Matthew Broderick playing Ferris Bueller comes out, sticks his head out from his bathroom in his robe, and he says to the crowd that stayed in the theaters, "You're still here. It's over. Go home." And everybody does. Long before the postscript was utilized as a storytelling apparatus by the Marvel Cinematic Universe, this postscript was the reward for the movie goer. For the one who stayed, there was an extra bit of the story, a secret that you could discover. Later when you watched the movie on VHS, those people who watched it there wouldn't see it. So why am I talking about this technique from the 1980s? The 21st chapter of the Gospel according to John is the postscript of the gospel. If you read John, chapter 20, and you come to its conclusion, you will see that the author of the Gospel of John has tied everything up perfectly. If you don't turn the page of your Bible, you might think the story is over. But the gospel writer gives the 21st chapter as a gift to those who see the story through. It's extra good news to the good news that he has written about. And in this postscript, we have a scene that Whitney previewed for us and that we just heard read. It's evening and Simon Peter decides to go fishing. Simon Peter, we have to understand, is navigating...navigating some deep personal issues right now. He has seen Jesus twice in his resurrected form. But it is reasonable for us to in our holy imaginations assume that he still is carrying with him the guilt and the shame that he experienced as he denied Jesus three times. We remember the scene in the midst of the passion of our Christ where he's standing around a barrel fire there in Jerusalem. And those who have seen Jesus have also seen Simon Peter and they say, "You're one of his followers, aren't you?" And he says, "No, I don't know him." And they say this a couple times and each time he denies.

And so his disciples, his brothers in this spiritual work, they know that he is still carrying this guilt and this shame. They have not been erased by the resurrection of Christ. In fact, potentially, they have been amplified that Jesus has come back and he must face this one again. So in this postscript, notice first that his brothers do not let him go alone. This is important for us as those who follow in the way of Christ. When others are carrying with them a heavy burden, it's important that we don't make them walk the journey alone. And so they get in the boat with him. Some of them skilled fishermen. Some of them called from ashore just like this one to be

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disciples of Jesus. And they go about this fishing trip. Notice also they are wholly unsuccessful. The postscript tells us that they spend all night fishing and they come up with nothing. Some are skilled fishermen. They know how to navigate the waters. They know how to find the pockets where the fish are bedding. And yet, they fish all night and come up empty. Lest we reduce this scene to a simple fishing story, it is critical that we note that sometimes you can fish all night and come up empty. I've seen it. I've seen it in marriages that are on the brink. Couples who have fished all night trying to figure out what it is that has been lost and must be reclaimed for them to continue forward. And yet they come up empty. I've seen it in friendships. Sometimes we fish all night in our work, our vocation, even in our study as students, and we come up empty. We can't figure out what it is that feels lacking, but it is still lacking. We are still in need. I've seen it with parents, particularly of adult children, and adult children and parenting their parents. We can spend all of our energy, all of our time, all of our best resources, all of our skill on trying to come up with a solution to the problem. And yet, we fish all night and come up empty. And thank God, the scene doesn't end there. The postscript continues. Jesus on the shore meeting them. Notice first that without having it communicated to him, he knows their need. In verse 5, Jesus says to them from the shore, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" He knows that they have to be frustrated. He knows that they are in need. He knows that need even before they have to speak it to him. Notice also that he invites them to trust. In verse six, he says to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat and you will find some fish." They've been doing this. You can imagine they didn't just fish on one side of the boat all night long. And yet, he invites them to do so once more to cast it to the right side of the boat. And they do, in trust. Notice further that Christ provides a large catch of 153 fish. An odd number to keep track of, but the gospel writer wants us to for some reason. So many fish that they can't even draw in the nets into their boat. They kind of have to drag it beside them. Good thing they're only about a hundred yards from shore. Christ notices their need, invites them into trust, and then provides for them in abundance. an abundance that they could not have imagined just moments before.

Notice finally that Christ tends to them with a meal, a charcoal fire reminiscent of the one that Simon Peter had stood around only a few days earlier. Fish and bread, simple elements. It's a meal of forgiveness. It's a meal for their weariness.

The postscript here is an encouragement for us and certainly was for the disciples. If you are tired, if you feel worn down emotionally, physically, even spiritually, then this scene, this nugget is for you who are still here to read the story. It's an encouragement to listen for the voice of Jesus with the sure knowledge that he knows your need even more deeply than you do. With the sure knowledge that he can bring about an abundance that you cannot yet imagine. With the sure knowledge that there is care and tending from this one we call Jesus. And so in this way, this

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postscript is a gift for us, those who've remained beyond the running of the credits. It's an extra nugget for us. And we're going to spend the next few weeks...we're spending the next few weeks in the 21st chapter. So, we're going to get a couple more stories, but this one is the first one. And I have to tell you, I for one am so grateful to have stayed through the credits because the gospel is teaching us that living a resurrected life does not mean that we will not have to navigate scarcity and frustration, weariness, and fatigue. But it does promise us that the risen Christ knows our needs. It does remind us to trust in the Christ for he will provide for us in our need and tend to us in our weariness. You know this week I wasn't in the same...or going into this week I wasn't in the same place as Simon Peter. I hadn't experienced the same sort of things that he had experienced. But there was a weariness that I carried from this place even after hearing our youth proclaim the good news so beautifully last Sunday. And gosh, I'm so grateful for time to be with friends old and new in a place that meant so much to me so many years ago, that shaped me into the person that I am. To hear their stories of how God is working in their lives and their churches and in their ministries. So grateful to travel across the country and meet a bunch of people I didn't know before the week and to hear afresh the way that God is working in and through ministries I will never lay eyes upon.

And so friends, I know not the waters where you have fished all night and come up empty. But whatever they are, I hope you too are grateful to have made it to the postscript of this gospel, and that in it you are reassured that Christ knows your needs even more deeply than you do. And that if you trust, Christ can and will provide even more abundantly than you might imagine. That Christ will tend to you. And it might not look like fish and bread on a grill on a beach of a lake. It might look like juice and bread this morning. Or it might look like a thousand other ways that our risen Christ sustains us. So may you know that Christ is there to provide and to tend. That's the good news of this story. And ultimately, it's the good news of the gospel. Thanks be to God.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, Mother of us all. Amen.