

WELCOME 4th May 2025 – 3 Easter '25 C

John 21:1-19

Guess what?!? **CHRIST IS RISEN! Absolutely!** Remember Easter is *NOT* a day it's a *LIFESTYLE*.

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands **Bible Study Qs** & **Growing Praise** inserts that help lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & then lead you out to share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

What I said earlier... **Easter** is *NOT A DAY* it's a *LIFESTYLE*...

Does that prove true for you? I ask because...

A fortnight ago we celebrated Jesus' resurrection...said *He is Risen!* (...Risen indeed) The stone was rolled away. The tomb was empty. People met the risen Jesus...**BUT** **Are** you more alive now? than ^b/₄...Am I? What difference has the resurrection made? ...in us? I am not asking about the difference it makes to our coming Kingdom future. I mean in our lives today...now...wherever you've been in the last 2 weeks. I ask because not long after the resurrection...meeting Jesus...receiving the Holy Spirit... being sent by Jesus as Jesus was sent by the Father... The disciples --- **Go** Fishing They are in many ways, back where they started...

There is something comfortable about routines...regular habits & familiar places... well-known patterns & activities...that's where we find the disciples today...fishing: **So** *they went out in the boat, but caught nothing all night.* But where the familiar, routine, & comfortable yield nothing...Jesus calls them & us into his abundance. **Then** *he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, & you'll get some!" So they did, & they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it. --- Then* Jesus told him, "Follow me." What the familiar, routine, & comfortable can't do...Jesus does...

New life in him is meant to be just that...new...vibrant...creative...daring...bold...at times even risky or dangerous...but it's **THERE** where nets & lives are filled by Jesus for his purpose...abundant for now as well as for-ever...The Resurrection is meant to do just that in each of us...now as well as forever...

Jesus isn't interested in **YOUR** best, He is interested in **you** living **HIS** best.

Let's pray then experience this IDENTITY CHECK by the Holy Spirit today...

PRAYER OF THE DAY (Martin Luther)

Lord Jesus look upon us, empty vessels that needs to be filled. In faith we are weak—strengthen us. In love we are cold—set us alight so that your love may go out through us to our neighbour. We doubt and are unable to trust you fully. Lord, strengthen our trust in you. You are all the treasure we possess. We are poor, you are rich, and you came to have mercy on the poor. We are sinners, you are goodness. From you we receive goodness, justice & righteousness, but we can give you nothing in return. Therefore we shall stay with you & delight in you in the hope that you will use us for your glory. Jesus Christ alone Lord & Saviour we pray in your name --- Amen

Let's hear God's word for this morning...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Describe what you consider your "comfort zone." Why that?
2. To what challenge would you want Jesus to NOT call you? Why that?

3 EASTER '25 C – IDENTITY CHECK: SHOW ME YOUR NEW LIFE

I don't know if you remember how last week's reading from John ended...Jn 20:19-31...But let's start where John left off before we get into Jn 21: **30** *The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book.* **31** *But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, & that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.* – Jn 20:30-31 I don't know about you, but that feels like John just slapped a **big** "The End" on the gospels. Close the curtain. Shut the book. That's all there is...This is what you need to know, trust, & share for faith in Jesus to bear fruit in you & through you. :||

But somewhere along the way, the Holy Spirit whispered into John's ear... **"Go on... tell 'em one more..."** But what we read today isn't just bonus footage, an epilogue or even what Ms Malone my favourite HS English teacher would call a denouement...final part of a play, film, or book that ties up all the loose ends & explains all the unexplained stuff you missed the first time...What John does in this final chapter of the gospels, (literally the **LAST** chapter of the narrative of Jesus' life & earthly ministry) is hand the work Jesus began in a handful of disciples over to the church. This is the part of the story where **JOHN WRITES US IN**...How do I know...what are Jesus' last words? *Follow me.* Interestingly enough...those were the **1st words** he spoke to the disciples @ the start. *Follow me.* Here, John brings the gospel full circle, & gives it to us. Every generation of disciples is expected to hear & respond to Jesus' invitation for themselves. What John does in this final chapter of the gospels (literally the last chapter) is hand the work Jesus began in a handful of disciples over to the church.

Later, *Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened.* The disciples have returned home. They're back in Galilee...back to fishing. They've moved from the empty tomb to their boats, from the house in Jerusalem to the familiar waters of the Sea of Galilee. They've travelled some 120ks from the place of Jesus' resurrection & slipped back into their old routine of fishing. Same boats/nets/water/work. That's when & where Jesus *"appeared again to the disciples."* You've heard me say ^{b/4} that a rut is sometimes just a long grave...It's now two weeks after Easter & I'd bet we've all gone back to the routine of our lives. I still do the shopping on Mondays, read the Bible/ride my bike in the AM...cook dinner most PMs.

The problem is not the routine...familiar...comfortable...but that we can't expect new life if all we ever live is what we've always lived...We can't expect new life if we keep hanging on to the old. If nothing ever changes nothing ever changes. **So** *they went out in the boat, but caught nothing all night.* They fished through the darkness but their nets were empty; *"caught nothing all night."* The darkness, is not just atmospheric. There is a darkness about the disciples. In the same way, the empty net is less about their

lack of success fishing & more descriptive of the disciples themselves. They seem as empty as their nets. When the familiar, comfortable & routine prove fruitless...too many of us keep doing the same thing hoping for different results...or we give up...empty is empty...

Who here hasn't experienced that kind of darkness/emptiness? You know what it's like. I know...You "fish," you work, you raise your kids, you be married, offer a kindness, attempt a witness...you do **YOUR BEST** but you still come up empty. In those times we come to the limits of our own self-sufficiency. We have nothing to show for **OUR BEST** effort & nothing left to give. You do **YOUR BEST** but you still come up empty.

I'd bet every one of us could tell an emptiness story...about the day nets kept coming up empty...loved one died...friendship or marriage fractured...we weren't sure anyone would notice if we just walked off into the bush or into the river & never came back. Maybe it was that moment when you were drowning in guilt, regret & disappointment...An extended season of fear, failure, & self-doubt. A longing or restlessness for "something" but you don't know what. The hollow sound of unanswered prayer, doubts, & questions w/o answers.

But how does that happen? Why?...What had Jesus said while he was still w/ them? **I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, & I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.** – Jn 15:5 Whatever prompted this journey to Galilee, the return to the habits of familiar, comfortable, & well-known is empty. They've done all they know how to do & they have nothing to show for it. Done their best & it's still void...void of Jesus...but watch...

That's when Jesus, still unrecognized by the disciples, shows himself: **At dawn** *Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was.* ⁵ *He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"* terrible translation...**better:** *"Children, you have no fish, do you?"* He speaks tenderly as if to a group of school kids caught wasting time & it's not so much a question as it is a statement...like a parent speaks to their own kids already knowing the answer. Of course they have no fish...But over & over again it is precisely in the emptiness that Jesus reveals himself. No wine @ a wedding in Cana. No food surrounded by a multitude. No hope for a woman bleeding for 12 years drained of life & resources by Drs. No life in Lazarus, Jairus' daughter or the widow of Nain's son...it is precisely in the emptiness that Jesus reveals himself...

The miracle begins when the nets are empty...when darkness covers everything. Only empty nets can be filled. Only empty hearts can be made whole. Only empty lives can be raised to abundance. Only empty disciples can become missionaries. *"At dawn..."* The presence of Jesus always causes light to break in. Darkness does

not win. The light *always* prevails. And you know John's not just sharing the regular solar cycle...Wherever darkness is deepest in your life, whatever darkness overshadows you today, *that darkness* is the place where Jesus will make himself known. The shadows & gloom of this world...your life or mine are the raw material from which Jesus will fashion new life. Resurrection can *ONLY* happen in a graveyard

Then Jesus said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, & you'll get some!" So they did, & they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it...There were 153 large fish, & yet the net hadn't torn. Jesus' call & command always point away from the routine, regular, familiar & comfortable into the new perhaps risky untried & maybe even dangerous. And quite frankly...this is the 2nd time something like this has happened to the disciples...long night of empty-netted fishing...Jesus shows up w/ a command to try again & nets that overflow w/ a catch. But this time...this time instead of Peter pleading w/ Jesus to go away he's overcome w/ an urgent need to get close to Jesus...barely takes time to put his robe back on & into the water he goes.

I suspect this is Jesus' way of inviting Peter back into fellowship. He replays much of his life among the 12 in this simple scene as a gesture of forgiveness...a sign of restoration. It's Peter's re-commissioning...*This time, the net won't break.* Their bond won't fray. Their friendship won't be strained @ the point of denial...in fact after this, Peter will make good on his promise to even die for Jesus. But first there's a meal...the Last Supper becomes the First Breakfast. Confessions of love replace fearful denials. A new charcoal fire kindles forgiveness in place of the cold ashes of rejection...guilt...shame. But Jesus does more than forgive Peter. This isn't a firm hug & a pat on the back...Jesus forgives him & puts him right back to work: **Feed** my lambs....**Take** care of my sheep.....**when** you are old, you will stretch out your hands, & others will dress you & take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. *Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."*

Like Peter, we fail Jesus. We fail ourselves. We fail to live up to our own expectations, much less what Jesus has asked of us. I do it, you do it. Every day... We insist on our way. We don't listen to each other. We look away from suffering. We refuse to forgive, or be held accountable for our own sin. We justify bad behavior (usually our own). We give into our anxieties & sink into despair. Maybe we even just give up. On Jesus. On ourselves. On any hope that tomorrow can be better than today. And so we live cynically, hopelessly, begrudgingly small lives not at all trusting the power that raised Christ from the dead also dwells in us...as if Jesus' call to make disciples belonged to someone else *not us*.

But Jesus refuses to give up on us. Jesus finds us in our habitual comfortable empty places & calls us to himself again...makes a place for us at his table again...forgives us again & sets us back to work like he did Peter...Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Make room in your life for the struggling, the hopeless, at the end of their ropes. Show them they have a place in the kingdom...Treat your enemies to kindness & those who impose upon you w/ generosity...make today better for someone & make sure Jesus gets the credit. Tell them about him...In this last encounter, John brings the gospel full circle, & gives it to us. Every generation of disciples is expected to hear & respond to Jesus' invitation for themselves.

Then Jesus told him, "Follow me." He says that to you & me too...New life in Jesus is meant to be just that...new...vibrant...creative...daring...bold...at times even risky or dangerous...but it's **THESE** where nets & lives are filled by Jesus for his purpose...abundant for now as well as for-ever...The Resurrection is meant to do just that in each of us...now as well as forever...

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As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

TAKE IT HOME

Who do you know who needs to feel forgiven & restored by Jesus?

...just like Peter...

How can you communicate that to them this week?

(Be specific...so we can pray for that to unfold.)

Let's pray with that in mind...

Lord Jesus show us to the "right side of the boat," that place of risk & daring, newness & boldness...Take hold of all that we are & set us to work speaking your promise of salvation with full assurance and unshakable conviction so the people around us might share in your eternal joy and the Father's endless delight. In your name we pray... Amen