

“Living a Resurrected Life”

John 21:1-19

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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Seminary professor Dr. Lisa Davison wrote, “The audacity of proclaiming a message of resurrection is a world full of death, a message of hope in a world full of suffering and despair. Who do we think we are? What gives us such boldness? It’s absurd. Why would the world listen?...the power of the story really is not about something that may, or may not, have happened over 2000 years ago. Rather, it is the challenge for us to find ways that we can work for the resurrection of love in the world right now. It’s one thing to believe in a resurrection, but it’s something else to live a resurrected life” (Lisa Davison, Facebook post April 4, 2021).

It seems to me that Peter and the other disciples might have been learning this very thing.

Here they were. Based on the information we hear in the Gospel of John it was at least a week after the resurrection...likely longer, especially since their location has shifted from Jerusalem to Galilee.

An exact timeline isn’t given but we are told that seven of the disciples are gathered together. We don’t know why or what they are doing. Maybe they continue to talk about everything that has happened. Maybe they continue to seek to understand. Maybe they are just together in that silence shared by people who know each other well and who have had the same experiences...a silence that doesn’t have to be filled with words. We are not sure what they are doing when the scene opens, but it is Peter who we hear speak first.

“I am going fishing,” he says.

After all, he was a fisherman. So, maybe it was just his instinct. Maybe fishing was where he felt most comfortable, where he found peace.

Or maybe, after three years of traipsing across the countryside with an itinerant preacher (whose life ended on a cross) he decided to return to fishing as a profession.

Maybe he didn’t know how to continue on without Jesus leading them, and maybe he had resigned himself to life as he knew it before.

Or maybe he was just hungry and knew the others were, too.

“I am going fishing,” he said. And the others decided to join him.

So, out they went. Loaded up in the boat with all they needed including nets full of expectation. And yet, by morning they had caught nothing. And I don’t know about your experiences, but my childhood memories of fishing with my uncle tell me that sometimes you fish and you just don’t catch a thing.

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Here they were. It was morning. They had fished all night. Their nets remained empty, perhaps a haunting reflection of how their lives felt.

But suddenly a voice came from the shore. “Why don’t you try the right side of the boat? Throw the net in there.”

Now, remember, John tells us that they didn’t know who was speaking to them. So, it could have been easy to ignore this shoreline coach. But, meanwhile, what did they have to lose? They threw their nets in and we are told that they caught so many fish they couldn’t even get them in the boat.

And there, in that moment, they knew it was Jesus.

As quickly as they could they got to shore. Jesus was there, already preparing breakfast for them, but asking them to bring some of their catch to the feast as well. And together they sat at the edge of the water, having recognized Jesus in abundance and at the table, even a makeshift picnic table.

Then, at some point after they had finished eating, Jesus turned to Peter. And they shared a conversation.

“Do you love me?” Jesus asked. “Yes, I love you.” “Feed my lambs.”

“Do you love me?” he asked again. “Of course I love you.” “Tend my sheep.”

“Do you love me?” The question came a third time. “You *know* that I love you.” “Feed my sheep.”

And much has been made of this conversation. We can’t help but notice the parallel as Peter, having denied Jesus three times, has the opportunity to proclaim his love not once, not twice, but three times. We can’t help but notice this as a moment of transition as Peter, once proclaimed the rock upon whom the church would be built, steps into a new kind of leadership.

But there is something else we don’t want to miss. See, while Matthew gives us a clear commissioning saying, “Go therefore and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19, NRSV), perhaps this passage should be read the same way, as a commissioning, a reminder to the disciples of what they are about.

After all, here in this story, Jesus shows up and provides abundantly for his disciples. But, that’s not where the story ends.

Rather, in their recognition of him and in the midst of their experience of abundance, they are called to go and care for others. They are called to share the food they have. They are called to tend to the needs, not only physical hunger, but to tend fully to others of God’s children. They are commissioned to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world.

And the same calling remains for us.

If we think that our faith is about what we get, then it is time to reorient ourselves.

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If we think that resurrection is only something Jesus did years ago in order that we can benefit, then it is time to rethink our understanding.

As Dr. Lisa Davison wrote, "...it is the challenge for us to find ways that we can work for the resurrection of love in the world right now. It's one thing to believe in a resurrection, but it's something else to live a resurrected life" (Lisa Davison, Facebook post April 4, 2021).

See, that's really what our commissioning, our calling, our living as the hands and feet of Jesus is all about - it is about living the resurrected life. Friends, we are invited to recognize Jesus in the many ways and places he shows up. We are invited to feast on the abundance which he offers. And yet, neither of these experiences is really about us or what we get from it.

Rather, the presence and abundance of the divine sustain us *in order that* we can answer the call to make a difference in the world...to live a resurrected life and in doing so to work for the resurrection of love in our world right now.

We have been meeting with young people who are considering baptism. Today we stood in witness and support as Kyle and Brandon brought their child, Felix, to be dedicated. Perhaps in these rituals the commitment we make is more obvious - it is the commitment of offering care and nurture, of answering God's call to be the presence of Jesus in the world with and for others. But, friends, this is our calling every day of our lives.

This is not just our calling in response to new life or newly proclaimed faith. But it is our calling in all that we do: to share what we have, to care for those we encounter, to resurrect love in this world.

What would the world look like if this were how we lived? What could the world look like if we took seriously this commission granted first to Peter, but to us as well? What will the world look like when in all things we bring love? What can the world look like when we live as people who are meant to care for others, when we not only celebrate resurrection, but live the resurrected life? May it be so.