

“Eat a Good Breakfast and Do Your Chores”
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Acts 9:1-20, Revelations 5:11-24, John 21:1-19
April 18, 2010

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen. The texts for this morning’s message are the lessons for this day.

I have often heard from Minnesotans that there is never a bad time to go fishing or golfing – we not only have more lakes than any of the other states in the union we have more holes of golf per capita. Never-the-less today’s Gospel strikes me as an odd time for these seven disciples to be out on the lake – why, in light of the recent resurrection from the dead are Peter and the disciples out fishing? Certainly Jesus had told them He would appear to them in Galilee so the trip up north to the big lake is on the agenda – but why go fishing?

Perhaps it was nothing more than the fact that they were back home – what had always been home, at any rate, and fishing was the trade that Peter, Andrew, James and John had plied before going off to follow Rabbi Jesus. Come to think of it they might have wanted some fresh air after staying cooped up in hiding. It does sound as if Peter was restless, saying, “I’m going fishing” and the others decide it sounds like a fine idea and join in. Then again, maybe it was more than just seeking the familiar as they had also been with Jesus numerous times on the Galilean Lake and it could be His words still echoed on the night breeze – not just the sermons they’d heard but “PEACE! BE STILL!” in the storm they had thought would take their very lives.

Regardless, there they are at dawn with nothing but net when a man on the shore calls out a rather strange greeting calling this assortment of men “Children” and telling them to put the net down to the right of the boat and they would get some fish. Well, it’s never a bad thing for a fisherman to get a fish so they got busy – and they ended up with a monstrous payload which gives John, the beloved disciple, a sudden flash of recognition as he points out to Peter this must be “the Lord.”

Naked – well, at least down to the gauzy undergarment a good Jewish man would wear – Peter throws on an outer cloak jumps into the water and rushes to meet Jesus. A charcoal fire is blazing and bread is warming along with some fish but Jesus asks Peter to get some from the fresh catch for Him to prepare. How those 156 most miraculous beauties must have been wriggling and writhing in the dewy dawn of the morning. My mother-in-law would have had her cornmeal ready to make the newly cleaned catch crispy – nothing like her fresh fried fish for breakfast! We’re not told what Jesus’ recipe was but He seems to be underscoring what my father always said, “Make sure you have a good breakfast before you do your chores.”

Have a good breakfast and do your chores - that was the Saturday morning regimen at the Benke household when I was growing up. We weren’t the healthiest tribe with our constant earaches but if you were going to have the stamina to do your Saturday duties a good breakfast was the way to

start. Oh, we never got up as early as Ray would have liked – he was always up at 5 am (which is more of a concept than a real time for me). Once breakfast was eaten there were bed linens to be changed, bathrooms to be scrubbed, and my personal task from age 7 on of vacuuming the stairs each week. Everyone had work to do because we all lived there – we were a family – no one got by without a task to complete which included the dishes and no one got to run off to play until the chores were finished.

The same was true in this little fellowship of believers. Oh the list of chores was not long (we'll get to that in a minute). The more defined list came with the Great Commission at Ascension and then most powerfully with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church on Pentecost, but here is where we see the Christian community being formed in a very intimate context and the most identifying traits of this family of faith expressed: love, forgiveness, restoration. Those are still key to living in community as God's people today!

Speaking of the importance of community T.S. Eliot said, "What life have you if you have not life together? There is no life that is not in community, and no community that is not lived in praise to God." Already this band of 7 disciples on a fishing trip up north is a community formed around faith in the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus but there was something else on Jesus' agenda– a restoration to community that needed to be explored.

In an aching echo of the three times Peter had denied Jesus on the night He was betrayed Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Jesus did not ask Peter what he believed about the resurrection, salvation, or any other theological issue. Three times he asked Peter one question: "Do you love me?"

Some sitting in a pew might be more comfortable with the question, "Have you been obedient?" but "Do you love me?" What kind of question is that of Peter – he'd wept bitterly, he'd turned again in faith – this is not a very Lutheran question as we concentrate (rightly so) much more on God's love for us (which never fails, I may add). But there it hangs, for Peter, and for us, Jesus saying, "Do you love me?"

Henri Nouwen, priest and devotional writer, pressed the point of this confrontation saying : the focus of our lives must be "the discipline of dwelling in the presence of the One who keeps asking us, 'Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?'" He stated that this "is the discipline of contemplative prayer"

We do well to remember at all times that God desires us to be in love – in love with our God – longing to be in God's presence, meeting God in the Word, in worship, at God's table – and in our own private and personal place...under the stars of night, fishing in a lake or stream, or on the golf course (lots of prayers are spoken there).

Feasting at the Lord's Table, fed and nourished by God's Word, encouraged by the fellowship of those who gather with us in God's house and who walk alongside us by faith and dwelling in our love relationship with God there are now chores to be done. We, all of us must "Feed God's Sheep."

Oh, maybe it would be easier to get about our tasks if we'd had a miracle fish fresh from the fire with Jesus but it wasn't the miracles that got the disciples moving. It wasn't the miracles that set the followers of Jesus apart – it was love – their love for others – those outcast and in need – those separated from community by merciless acts who found forgiveness and restoration – not the miracles. Miracles – from the time of the Pharaohs on have been able to be duplicated well, except for that final plague – the one that showed God's power over life and death with the killing of the first-born. In the resurrection of Jesus from the dead the ultimate power of God over death and the gift of life eternal was again made known – the first born from the dead – Jesus our Savior and Lord - is the one who loves us, who gave His life for all.

Odd to think that if others were there that morning they'd have thought Jesus looked like just another man on the beach calling out fishing advice to people who hadn't caught a thing. But the Son of the Living God was in their midst that day – is in our midst this morning in Word and Sacrament – to feed them a good breakfast and then send them off to do their chores!

May we be faithful in the tasks God has granted for us to do – excited by the work before us – and may we be so filled with God's love that it overflows to others in all we do! AMEN