

04/10/2016 - Third Sunday of Easter

“Breakfast with Jesus”

Scripture: Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Easter is a time of living in the presence of the resurrected Lord, and what that means for us. After the powerful and blinding moment of Transfiguration on the mountain with the disciples and the deep and profound reflection and repentance that Lent seeks from us, the Resurrection should be this profound, unbelievably mind-blowing event that shatters even our greatest spiritual mountaintop experience.

We certainly treat it that way; Easter is after all the high holiday of the Christian tradition. The flowers, colors, extra services, special breakfasts, special family dinners - all of it speaks to the depth and profundity of the central truth of our faith: that Jesus Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.

But the Gospels don't make it particularly special. The dawning awareness of the presence of the Resurrected Christ happens in really mundane places. In Luke 24, two guys are walking down the road with a stranger and they invite him in for dinner. The stranger breaks bread with them and they see Jesus. On Easter Sunday, Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for the gardener - not some authority figure, like a rabbi or a centurion or a civic leader, but a gardener.

The presence of the Resurrected Jesus in these stories leads to praise and thanksgiving. All these things happen, as Psalm 30 says, “so that my soul may praise you, O Lord, and not be silent.” The angels, living creatures and elders of the heavenly host watch and praise the worthiness of the Lamb and bow down to worship that God has so joyously, gently and lovingly given over all God's wealth and power and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing to His Son Jesus Christ. This might give us the idea that Jesus' Resurrection is some spiritual thing that takes us out of the world, that it completely cleaves the bright and spiritual and beautiful from the mundane and physical and present, but exactly the opposite is true. The Resurrection brings all things into unity for the sake of God's love through Jesus Christ.

Last week, the question that didn't get asked was “What are the disciples actually doing during the eight days between Jesus appearance to the other disciples and then to Thomas?” My guess is they were doing everyday, simple things. They were going to the market, they were going to work - because supporting families and households does not somehow magically disappear when Jesus is around, they were talking amongst themselves. And then Jesus shows up.

In many ways there is a pattern that emerges here. In the Gospel Resurrection stories, the memory of who Jesus was does not match who Jesus actually is in the Resurrection, and so some person shows up in the midst of the disciples grief. The person is incognito, unknown, a stranger. Today, it is a man on the beach watching the disciples fish.

When we lived in Montana, I learned how to flyfish. It was pretty funny because there were quite a few flyfishermen in my congregation there. Each one of them knew what fly to use, how best to cast, the right weight line to use, on and on. Not one of them agreed with each other.

I went out a lot and was highly unsuccessful in catching fish, but one of the thoughts I had while I was out there, standing in the river in Yellowstone National Park, was that most of flyfishing was up to the fish, not the fisherman. As Samuel Johnson was said to have said, “*A fishing rod was a stick with a hook at one end and a fool at the other.*”

But there was something even more profound that I understood while flyfishing. Fishing, finally, is a mundane activity. It is repetitious, mostly boring, and finally simple. All that banality is punctuated by a fish grabbing the hook and putting up a fight until it is either reeled in or dropped from the hook. In the midst of the repetition and simplicity is what surrounds you. I learned to flyfish in one of the most beautiful places in the world. I would go out and stand in a river that flowed down from mountains and through a vast mountain valley with wolves, elk, deer, marmots, squirrels, bears, buffalo, eagles, hawks, and fish. All of God’s creation surrounded me in that river, the Lamar River. It was profoundly spiritual, connected and profoundly physical, individuated at the same time.

And so it is this morning with the disciples. Peter says to the group of disciples, “I don’t know about the rest of you, but this seems like a good time to go fishing.” So the rest of the disciples join him. They catch nothing in their nets, which may or may not be typical on any given morning. On the shore is some guy watching them. They are not far off shore, only about 100 yards or so.

The man yells out to them, “Hey! Y’all catch any fish yet?” We know this is Jesus; the disciples do not. Based on what we know, it seems to me we might expect something profound here, but it is such a simple question. “Catch any fish?” I ask that to people fishing off the Breakwater. So do you, probably.

The disciples say, “No.” The stranger on the shore says, “Why don’t you throw in again?” The disciples do as he says and immediately the nets are so full, they can’t pull them in. As soon as the nets are full, recognition and awareness occur. As soon as abundance rather than scarcity, fullness rather than emptiness, active hope rather than doubt-filled waiting, as soon as the nets are full, Jesus is seen by the disciple whom Jesus loved.

“It is the Lord!”, he says. Peter is so excited that he impulsively gets dressed and jumps into the water and swims ashore. The rest of the disciples paddle into shore, dragging the net of 153 fish behind them. Onshore, there is a fire burning and bread baking. Jesus is cooking breakfast for the disciples. He is probably holding a coffee cup.

“Bring some of the fish you caught so we can all eat breakfast together”, he tells them. It doesn’t matter that Peter denied Jesus at the crucifixion. It doesn’t matter that all the disciples abandoned Jesus at the final moments of his pre-Resurrection life. It doesn’t matter that the disciples really have no idea what to do with a Resurrected Jesus, or that they were hiding out in fear in a room in Jerusalem.

Jesus serves them breakfast in the same way he did at the Last Supper, with love and without judgment. But it is also not the same way. Now, it is after the excitement and terror of a gory trial. It is after a horrible death on a Cross. It is after a few days of profound and shattering grief. And yet, here he is. Jesus, the one who did what he said he would do. Jesus, the one who has overcome death out of love for those whom he loves. Jesus, the one who serves.

Resurrection is not some huge flashing light on a mountaintop, and nor is it a rejection of everything that has gone before. No, Resurrection is the simple, life-changing, deep and flowing river of God's love and peace and hope and forgiveness flowing gently into every corner of our lives. The river flows out beyond the actions we might have committed in the past and pulls in the tributaries and streams that may have kept us from God, weaving us back into the flow of God, here and now, in the everyday work and relationships of our daily lives. This is why Jesus has Peter repeat that he loves Jesus.

“Do you love me, Peter?” The tributary meets the delta of the river.

“Do you love me, Peter?” The delta merges into the river.

“Do you love me, Peter? The tributary no longer knows itself as separate from the river.

In the same way, we are woven into the story. This is why we worship a person and not a book. The words and the story flow out beyond the book and push into history and overflow into our lives. We continue the story of Peter and the disciples, as if they just told us the story of Jesus standing by the waters of Galilee. Now we go out into our daily, simple lives and learn what it means to live in the midst of a Resurrection, what it means to meet Jesus over a simple breakfast in this world, on this day, in this place, with these people.

Amen.