

Apr. 8, 2018
Lesson 6: The Risen Lord Appears
Scripture: John 21: 1-14

Context:

The next part of our series on acknowledging God continues with the season of Easter and the glimpses of the risen Christ. Today's scripture lesson focuses on one of the resurrection narratives found in the Gospel of John. The first and second resurrection accounts are both times where the disciples are in complete shock that Jesus has risen from the dead. The first occurs when Mary Magdalene sees Jesus in the garden of the tomb and the second occurs as the disciples sit behind closed doors and Jesus appears at their table. However, this third time is not the last time Jesus appears. The last two verses of chapter twenty tell us as much: "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."¹ Yet, the chapter continues on.

As wonderful and important as this story is to the Gospel of John, many believe that this chapter is an addition to the gospel. With so many differences in vocabulary and style, this is clearly an added account of Jesus and his relation between Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved, who were probably dead when the story was written.² Today, it is similar to whenever we go to movies or read articles from the past. Different details emerge that are important to what happened, but people forget to include that as part of the story until a later retelling.

The story is unique to John although there are other records of Jesus in the region of Galilee when he rose from the dead. The other gospels do give accounts of the risen Christ, but John is the most thorough in giving conversations with the disciples. The stories cement Jesus as resurrected and in a new state.

Today's reading shows Jesus showing up back to the old haunt of the disciples where he first met them, the Sea of Tiberias (another name for the Sea of Galilee). It seems they have returned to their old trade of fishing. Simon Peter goes to do it on his own, but the other disciples say that they will go with him. As they go out on the lake, they catch nothing during the night. In the early morning, they hear a hazy figure call out to them to see if they have caught anything. They respond no to which they are told to try the other side. That does the trick and there are so many fish that they cannot pull them into the boat.

The disciple whom Jesus loves recognizes that it is the Lord and that sends Peter Simon off the boat and to swim to the shore. The disciples come with the boat and they approach Jesus with the fish. Jesus has brought bread for the breakfast, just as he did with them on the night of the Last Supper. This meal is different though. They do not ask questions, they simply sit and have breakfast on the beach. They know it's the Lord, but there's no point in the asking of the how and why. They enjoy the time they have

¹ John 20: 30-31; NRSV.

² Gerard Sloyan, "John," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press; Louisville, KY, 1988), 228.

together. Our author closes by reminding us this is the third time they see him after he has risen from the dead.

Application:

There are several important themes that arise as we think of acknowledging God from this scripture passage. The first is the importance of community and how we acknowledge God together even in things that may not at first appear “spiritual.” The disciples were going fishing, something that was a trade. But as I have often heard from different individuals and experienced myself, it is also cathartic to fish. There is something about being alone on a dock or a boat with a fishing rod. From time to time, you may enjoy having someone’s company. In the midst of that something happens that deeply connects you to God and another person.

Each year I have the tradition of going on a hike after Easter. It is treat to myself for the rigors that come with Holy Week and Easter. In my first appointment I did it on my own, mostly because I needed that time to decompress and went on the hike during the work week when everyone was busy. After I moved, I decided that I would still take a hike as this is a way that I experience God. However, this year, I will be accompanied with someone who has been a great peer and a good friend. Both of us have been looking forward to the experience especially after coming out of the great rush that is Holy Week and Easter. That is what happened that day with Peter and the disciples. Community was formed especially after they experienced Jesus’ death and then his strange and unexpected resurrection appearances.

The other theme we have here is that God binds our stories together. The risen Christ was seen at a place where the disciples were first called to come and follow. They started as fishers of fish and ended as fishers of both fish and men. All of it happened at the Sea of Galilee.

I had the opportunity to visit the Sea of Galilee when I went to the Holy Land. We went to one of the beaches where they have built a chapel dedicated to Peter as he had a very important conversation with Jesus on the beach that we will discuss next week. While the chapel was neat, what left me was the view of the sea and the beach itself. Once could see Jesus there with his holy huddle as they probably remembered all the times that they had been together in both the good and the bad.

While we were at the beach we all took pictures. The view was incredible, but there was also something moving about taking pictures with one another. I got to take pictures with some of my ordination class who had traveled with me for years on the journey to be ordained. I got to take a picture and spend time with another clergy colleague who has been a pastor to my family and me in good and bad times. And I even took pictures with people I had just met less than thirty-six hours before the trip! We were all bound there together by the risen Christ who continues to give life to us. Our stories were wrapped up together and we were all able to think about the one who constantly shows up in our lives, even we least expect it.

Rev. E. Hunter Pugh
Associate Pastor
First United Methodist Church

1380 W. Main St.
Dothan, AL 36301
Office (334) 793-3555 ext. 240
E-mail: hunter@fumcdathan.org

