

**Easter 3**  
**April 10, 2016**

*"Fishing with the Risen Savior"*

**JOHN 21:1-14**

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**A**fterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. <sup>3</sup> "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup> Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. <sup>6</sup> He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. <sup>7</sup> Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup> The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. <sup>9</sup> When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." <sup>11</sup> Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, <sup>153</sup>, but even with so many the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

I grew up fishing on the river that flowed through our family farm. However, my best experience in fishing was not on our river but in a canoe on Two Medicine Lake in Glacier National Park. It was late in June. The sun was setting over the mountains. You could see the trout rising to the service to feed, large brown trout. With almost every cast there was a bite. My friend Al came down to the lake to pick up his canoe. He called across the water, "Did you catch anything?" We replied, "Al, get the pan ready." When we finally came to where he was he already had a fire going. We cleaned the fish and put them into the pan. Al pulled out a loaf of fresh French bread. That was the best meal of fish I have ever had.

So it was with Jesus' disciples who were waiting for him to appear to them in Galilee after he rose from the dead. They had a fishing experience with Jesus that they would never forget for as long as they lived. It was Jesus who brought the fish into their net in large in number and large in size. It was Jesus who provided them with a meal of fresh fish and bread backed over hot coals. Later they would experience even greater fishing moments as they fished for people bringing them into the kingdom of God as they talked to people about Jesus and his resurrection from the dead.

So here we are this morning with Jesus. Here we are with another week in front of us to fish for people and bring them into the kingdom of God. We don't use flashy lures to bring

people into Jesus' kingdom. We cast the net of his Word and trust that he will bring people to us so we can speak to them about the hope we have in his resurrection from the dead. Let's take a closer look at this account about **"Fishing with the Risen Lord."**

### **Watch Jesus bring the fish into the net**

First let's watch Jesus as he brings the fish into the net. "Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together." Jesus told them through the angel that appeared to the women that they should wait for him in Galilee. He appeared once to them on the night of his resurrection and a second time a week later when he showed himself to Thomas. Now they are waiting for Jesus to appear to them again.

Peter says to those who were waiting patiently with him, "I'm going out to fish." Maybe it was one of this beautiful spring days on the Sea of Galilee. The birds were singing, the grass was green, the flowers were blooming. It was a good night for fishing. Yet, they caught nothing even though they fished all night. How hungry they must have been for some fresh fish, not the dried fish they were normally used to eating.

As the light of dawn begins to break through the eastern sky, Jesus stands on the shore but they do not realize it was Jesus even though he was only a hundred yards away from them. Shades of the Emmaus road when he hid himself from two of his disciples so they did not immediately recognize him. This stranger on the shore calls out, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" The Greek word for friends is actually "Boys!" The disappointed fishermen respond rather tersely, "No!" They worked all night and they had nothing to show for their labors.

The stranger on the shore tells them, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." The water is shallow here, close to the shore. Perhaps that man has seen some fish moving in the water they have not seen. So they throw out the net hoping that they might at least have one or two fish for a nice breakfast meal on the shore. Suddenly the net they have cast out over the water is filled with fish, large fish, 153 of them, perhaps as much as four or five hundred pounds of fish. Light weight throwing nets are designed to catch a few fish at a time, not 153 large fish.

It doesn't take John long to put two and two together and connect the dots. It is de ja vu all over again. It's reminiscent of that large catch of fish when Jesus first called them to fish for people. Peter wraps his outer garment around himself and jumps into the shallow water to be with Jesus. The other disciples follow pulling the boat and the large catch of fish. It was Jesus who brought the fish into the net just as he had done once before and as he would do in the future when they fished for people.

As exciting as this catch of fish was for Peter and the others, it would pale in comparison to the large catch of people they would see when Peter preached to people on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke about the great wonders of God. Fearlessly they spoke about Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Fearlessly they condemned the people for rejecting Jesus as their only hope of forgiveness and peace with God. That

day the disciples saw 3000 people come to faith and be baptized. It is always amazing how the Lord miraculously brings people into his kingdom whether it is in large numbers or one by one.

Think of our first lesson from Acts 9 about the life of Paul. Here is a man who hated the name of Jesus with a passion and persecuted Christians with every bit of strength he had in his body. Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and said to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He responds to the voice calling out to him by asking, "Who are you Lord?" The voice that comes back says, "I am Jesus." Three little words, "I am Jesus" and this man's life is turned around. He is born again. He is led out of darkness into the light. "Amazing grace who sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see."

When I fished in the river that ran through the family farm we used worms as bait when we were smaller. As we got older we used lures of different sizes and shapes that we cast into the water to lure the fish to open their mouths and bite onto the lure. It took skill to cast into the river and retrieve the lure at just the right speed. You also had to know the best places to catch the fish, usually in a deeper pool of water where they were feeding.

You were not lured into the kingdom of God as the fish is lured to take a bait. It was God's grace, God's amazing grace, that took you and took me when we wanted nothing to do with God's plan to rescue us. We were born rebellious and determined to live our lives of sin the way we wanted to live them. We were this way when we were little kids and into our teen years and even into our adult years. That nasty sinful rebellion still exists in us. But our God in love and mercy performed a miracle in your life and mine. He opened our eyes to see how bad sin was and how offensive it is to our God. He opened our eyes to see the terrible consequences of sin which is eternal death and punishment. He opened our eyes to see we could not do anything to remove even one thing that we do wrong. And then by God's grace he led us to see Jesus and everything he did to rescue us. He led us to believe in him for our salvation just as he did with Paul and with the 3000 people who came to faith on Pentecost. Colossians 1:13 says, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

The other day I was reading an obituary about a man who loved to fish. In the obituary they had what is known as "The Fisherman's Prayer." I pray that I may live to fish until my dying day. And when it comes to my last cast, I then most humbly pray: When in the Lord's great landing net And peacefully asleep That in His mercy I be judged Big enough to keep." If my hope of being judged big enough to keep depends on me and my performance, I have no hope. However if my being judged on the last day depends on Jesus and his power and who he is and what he has done for me, then I will be big enough to keep, not because of me, but because of Jesus. See these 153 fish being brought into the net by Jesus. Celebrate how Jesus has brought you into the net and made you a keeper by his grace and mercy.

### **Watch Jesus feed the fishermen**

As Peter and the other disciples come to the shore to be with Jesus they noticed that he

already had a meal waiting for them. "When they landed they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread." They worked all night and they were hungry. Jesus has fresh fish and bread baking on the fire. He asks them to bring more of the fish they had caught. He invites them, "Come and have breakfast." They knew it was Jesus. He gives them some of the fish. He gives them some of the bread. It wasn't just the food that made this meal special, it was the very special person who was feeding them. It was the risen Lord and Savior who would feed them from his love and from his Word in the years that were to come.

On Easter morning we sang the hymn, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." One of the verses we sang reminds us that Jesus will supply all of our needs. "He lives to grant me rich supply, He lives to guide me with his eye. He lives my hungry soul to feed. He lives to help in time of need."

Next Sunday will be Shepherd Sunday. Our readings and prayers and hymns and sermon will be about Jesus as our Shepherd who supplies all our needs. Because Jesus is who he says he is and because he died and rose again, he is able to supply our needs the way a shepherd feeds his sheep by leading them to green pastures and quiet cool waters. Just think, my dear Christians, how the Lord has fed you in the past. Think of all the feeding he will do for you in the future. He already knows in advance the mountain meadows where the grasses are rich and nutritious. Look back at how your Savior has served you with food for your soul. Look back at all the promises he has brought into your life that just keep feeding you and feeding you. He gives you strength to carry on with the work of fishing for people and bringing them into his kingdom, just as he did with his disciples when he served them breakfast on the Sea of Galilee.

Peter said, "I am going fishing." The sun is setting. It is spring. The flowers are blooming. The grass is green. The fish are in the shallows. Jesus is on the shore ready to serve us breakfast. It does not get any better than this. We get to fish with the risen Lord! Amen.