

Sermon #36
John 21:1-19
April 19, 2020

Come to Breakfast

I. Scene 1: A miracle that captures attention (vv. 1-8)

A. Peter and the other disciples go fishing but catch nothing all night.

How do you feel when you've worked hard at something, but very little if anything to show for it? We all want to see good results from our hard labor. When that doesn't happen, discouragement can overcome us.

I take you to a dark night on board a fishing vessel in first century Palestine. The only light illuminating our sight is that of the moon and a few stars. The large fishing net, called the *diktuon*, is cast to the port or the left side of the boat. All night long it has coasted in the waters without catching a single fish. The fishermen take their turns checking, but each time, no fish. The longer the night lingers, the more forlorn the men look, and the hungrier they become. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all.

B. The risen Lord appears on the seashore and surprises them with a miraculous catch of fish.

It's nearly morning now. The first rays of sunlight begin to slightly peak over the horizon. It's still mostly dark, however, when a lone voice calls to the gloomy men. "Friends, have you caught any fish?" Despite the term of endearment, the men perhaps are reluctant to respond. However, someone musters enough courage to simply say, "No." Apparently, their all-night fishing expedition has come to no results at all – nothing, nada, a big goose egg.

Then comes the reply from the shore. "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." Seriously!? This man hasn't been out here all night. He couldn't possibly know where the fish are. During the day he might see a school of fish in the bright waters, but not in the dark of the early morning hours.

But something makes the men pull up the large net and cast it off on the starboard side. Maybe they simply want to appease this lone shore dweller. Or perhaps they don't have anything else to lose, so they simply throw the net to the other side as instructed. And all of a sudden, the net is full to overflowing with one of the largest hauls they've ever seen. How did that happen? Who is this man on the shore anyways? This is scene 1, the long night of fishing.

C. John recognizes Jesus.

Yes, this is the story of Jesus and his disciples at the Sea of Galilee, at the very end of John's gospel, chapter 21, the epilogue, as it is called. The first two resurrection scenes where Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and then to the disciples have already occurred in the previous chapter. This could be the second or third week after Jesus' resurrection. Peter has come up with the brilliant idea to return to Galilee and go fishing. Six other disciples tag along with him. Perhaps in a time of grief and uncertainty, returning to something familiar is a good psychological relief.

But when they couldn't catch anything all night, Jesus performs a miracle where the haul of fish is too large to be towed on board even. At that moment, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, takes the first step. He understands the identity of the man when no one else recognizes him. "It is the Lord!" he declares to Simon Peter. Peter, likewise, true to character, puts on his outer garment and jumps into the water. No matter what the others think, he must see Jesus. Peter is taking the first step in response to Jesus' miracle. He denied his Lord once, but not this time; no, never again.

D. Peter takes the first step by swimming to shore.

So, Peter swims to shore, coming out sopping wet from head to toe. The others in the boat haul in the large catch of fish. Now, all are standing there, no one daring to say a word, they know who this man is.

A warm crackling fire and the smell of a few roasted fish and some bread are a warm welcome to anyone, but even more so to tired, famished, and discouraged fishermen. "Bring some of the fish you have caught," Jesus says to them. He's no longer the stranger on the shore with a bright idea. He's now the one who is calling them to breakfast with the master. They need this breakfast in more ways than one.

Before we journey on, let's stop and review our own lives. Do we need this warm invitation today as well? Do we need a breakfast with the master? What has been worrying you in these days? Maybe you are just a little too stir crazy and are ready to get back to life as normal after these coronavirus days. Or perhaps it is something deeper than that, the worry about a job or the loss of one. Your income is not matching the bills that are lining up on your dining-room table. Or a loved one is alone in the hospital somewhere and you can't even visit them. You worry also about the overall state of our country and world, where people are still getting sick and dying. Deeper still, there are some emotional and spiritual issues weighing on you and you are not even aware of them – but they affect you, and deeply. And you need a stronger prayer and devotional life.

Whatever the need or the difficulty, Jesus has prepared a breakfast for you. He invites you to "Come and have breakfast" with him, the title of this sermon. Tired, weary disciples needed a warm breakfast with Jesus and so do we. This leads us to scene 2, the breakfast scene itself.

II. Scene 2: A breakfast for tired, hungry, and discouraged disciples (vv. 9-14)

A. Jesus prepares a breakfast for his disciples.

So, what happens at this breakfast? What does Jesus say or do on this third resurrection appearance with his disciples? Why does he even appear at this moment in this way? We certainly can see that Jesus loves to break into the mundane, everyday life situations of his followers. Be careful, he might actually come to your breakfast anytime now. Cornflakes and Captain Crunch might get a little more exciting tomorrow. He might pour a bowl for himself. Or maybe he'll bring some fried fish and a few loaves of bread with him. What's really happening at Jesus' breakfast? Is this more than just a warm meal for weary fishermen?

B. Tired, discouraged men find healing and restoration.

Healing and restoration are taking place here at the shore side breakfast. Forgiveness is in abundant supply. Smiles are seen and laughter is heard. Jesus is with his disciples again. He is with us, where he enjoys being. He's listening to what's on your mind and my heart today. How much better we feel being with the master. He hears your concerns about your family and loved ones, your job, and the financial situation. All of a sudden, you feel like reading his Word again and praying more fervently. It all happens at the table of grace.

This is Christian community at its best, just as we've already seen at the foot of the cross with Mary being united with John her new son in Christ. And all the disciples are united with their risen Lord. We are all one family here at the seashore breakfast.

Over the years the family breakfast has grown. It now includes men, women, children from all ages and all societies around the world. At this breakfast table there is no animosity. No one is any greater or lesser than anyone else. There are not special titles or degrees. No one is discriminated against. No one is misunderstood or slighted. All are accepted, loved, appreciated, forgiven, restored and renewed. Failure is turned into faithfulness. No one takes advantage of each other. No ethnicity is greater than another; no racism, bigotry, anger, jealousy, or factions are found at Jesus' table. There is nothing impure or unrighteous here. You can let your hair down, be yourself, enjoy his presence and that of everyone else. This is what we have all longed for. Our relationship with the breakfast maker, and our relationship with the true family of God from all nations is our biggest unfulfilled desire today.

But before it is all over, a series of questions must be asked. They are asked of all disciples, but of one in particular.

III. Scene 3: A recommitment to follow Christ and feed his sheep (vv. 15-19)

A. A recommissioning to mission is taking place.

The breakfast is pretty much over. Some may still be eating the last bites of fish or bread while washing it down with seawater. Some may be bringing in the rest of the

fish. At this precise moment, Jesus turns to Peter and asks, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” Notice that Jesus uses his full name and not just his nickname, the Rock. Just as a parent uses all three names when getting a child’s attention, so Jesus has something important to say to Peter. For me that was, “Randall Stuart Coleman...” Yes, mom, you have something to say? Yes, Jesus has something to say, or rather to ask. It’s not harsh or judgmental, but it is direct and deep.

“Do you love me more than these?” Jesus’ asks Peter. Is Jesus asking Peter to give more allegiance than the other disciples? Perhaps, some think so. But I think Jesus is asking Peter to give up all to follow him – everything else, including fishing, his former way of life. Just as when Jesus told his disciples that they must deny themselves and take up their cross to follow him, so he is asking Peter once again the same thing. Peter, who had said that he would never deny his Lord, most certainly did in his moment of trial. Jesus is now here to renew Peter once again and reinstate him into full Christian service and ministry. The harvest is ripe; it’s ready for Peter, a restored worker.

B. Peter and the disciples are called to feed Jesus’ lambs and follow him.

Peter of course replies. “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus immediately replies, “Feed my lambs.” The two go directly together. To love Jesus is to serve and take care of his sheep. Three times Jesus repeats this for emphasis and three times Peter responds affirmatively. Three times Peter had denied his Lord and three times he had been reaffirmed here at this renewal breakfast.

The same is true for each of us. We’ve also denied our Lord through our own sins and failures. At this invitational breakfast, he also says to us, “Do you love me, do you love me more than these?” “Are you willing to serve me, live for me, take care of my sheep?” “Are you willing to die for me even?” That’s what he was saying to Peter as he indicated what type of death that Peter would glorify God – the death of martyrdom, the most excellent sacrifice of love.

Conclusion

Yes, for all of us, our lives seem turned upside down in this season of unknowns. We feel as though we are in a dark night while catching no fish at all. The future looks bleak even after coronavirus. We may go back to fishing, to something familiar. But Jesus has a far better plan – to follow him wholeheartedly in all we do – to love others as we love ourselves – to live by forgiving, trusting, and accepting his will for us – to leave all and follow him. How about you today? Are you ready for breakfast? Come, the table is set.