

Order of Worship
May 8, 2022
4th Sunday of Easter



God calls us to worship:
(Congregational response in bold type)

The Lord is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Psalm 34:1-3, 7-8 ()

Hymn: #258 “Thine be the glory”

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication:

God of the ages, God of today,
You are compassion; our cup overflows.
You are hope; you lead us into green pastures.
You are truth; you lead us beside quiet streams.
You are life; you restore our souls.
Morning, noon and night, O God, you are the source of our joy.
We gather to worship you as one family of your people,
honoring you as our Creator,
trusting you as our Saviour,
celebrating you as the Spirit who gives us life. Amen.

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

God of mercy:
you have called us to be thankful
for your good gifts to us,
but too often we have taken them for granted
as if we deserved them.

**You have called us to be hopeful
through the gospel of Jesus Christ,
but too often despair has come upon us,
and the cares of the world
have weighed us down.**

**You have called us to be joyful
in the wonder of your presence among us,
but too often we become mired in the mundane
and lose the gift of reverence.**

**By your saving power, O God,
enable us to celebrate your love for us
with joy and thanksgiving.**

God offers the assurance of grace:

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Readings: John 21:1-14 ()

Sermon:

Come and have breakfast

1. John 21 begins with the line: “After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (AKA: the Sea of Galilee); and *he showed himself in this way.*” This chapter is concerned with not simply that Jesus showed himself to be alive after he had been crucified and buried in the tomb; rather, it is concerned with the implications of his resurrection for his followers and, collectively, the church. What interests John in chapter 21 is not just the fact that Jesus showed himself, but how he showed himself and what that means for the reader, i.e., us.

“After these things Jesus showed himself again...and he showed himself in this way.”

The “these things” refers to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and his subsequent appearances to his disciples. In other words, this is not the first time the disciples have seen Jesus alive. They knew he was resurrected. They knew he lived.

After Jesus had shown himself alive to the disciples, after Simon Peter saw the linen grave clothes folded on the bench in the tomb empty of their body, after Thomas called the Twin put his hand in the nail holes in Jesus’ hands and the spear hole in his side, after the incredible revelation that God has power even over the grave, after the revelation that nothing can stop God’s plan of redeeming and resurrecting all of creation, the disciples went fishing!

Now, there’s nothing wrong with their decision to go fishing. They probably needed some money. They probably needed some food. There was probably a great deal of comfort gained in the familiar task of fishing for these seasoned fishermen. Nor is it unusual to fish at night. This was a common practice on the sea of Galilee.

However, John has carefully crafted his gospel so that the real events tell a more profound story of faith and Spirit-filled living.

The disciples had just been commissioned by the resurrected Jesus to go into the world, as Jesus came into the world, forgiving sin in His name, and speaking words of peace and healing by the power of the Holy Spirit. They chose, instead, to go fishing.

One of John’s favourite means of telling the deeper story through regular events is in the contrast between light and dark; day and night.

Jesus is the Light of the World. The darkness of night is therefore symbolic of the absence of awareness of Jesus; the absence of trust in his word; the absence of relying on His Spirit; the absence of belief.

The important detail is not that the disciples went fishing – after all, Jesus would command them to do the same in a few verses – but that they toiled all *night* and caught nothing.

They did what they knew to do. They cast their nets as they have always done, and have usually been successful. But that night, they did it without Jesus. They toiled all night, and caught nothing.

2. There's a common refrain amongst church goers: "Where are all the people?"

Even before COVID, this was our common lament. The pews aren't filled, the Sunday Schools are dwindling or gone. COVID has exacerbated the situation.

"Where are all the people?"

We know the gospel story. We know that what we have to offer is good news. We know that if people would only come into the sanctuary they would find a community that cares and in which they can endure and celebrate all the challenges and joys of this life. We know that Jesus is risen and that God is working to redeem all of creation. We know that Jesus is good news.

Yet, our pews remain less-than-full.

We do what we know to do.

We cast our nets as we always have. We keep worshiping on Sunday morning: preaching, singing hymns, having Bible studies. We engage in private worship at home.

Yet we are catching very little.

3. Notice that even though they seemed to have ignored Jesus and laboured fruitlessly because of their veiled eyes-of-faith, Jesus didn't condemn their lack of understanding.

As the sun's rays lightened the water and the dark of night turned broke with the dawn, Jesus stood on the beach and "showed himself in this way."

Two things happened as the day broke that reveal what Jesus' resurrection means to us as members of his church.

First, he showed himself as the omniscient guarantor of Christian ministry. Ministry, undertaken in Christ's name, by His power, and in obedience to His Word will be successful. When, in obedience to His command, the fishermen cast their nets on the correct side of the boat, the side on which were all the fish, the nets came up full!

Secondly, he showed himself as the one who would continue to serve his disciples, to meet their core-longings and immediate needs so that, thus satisfied, they could serve others in his name.

Notice the changing mood in the story. It began in frustratingly futile labour in the darkness of misunderstanding and timid faith, now that the day has broken and the fishermen trust the risen Christ's word, night is over.

4. And Jesus calls to us: "Come and have breakfast."

Breakfast. The meal that breaks the fast of night.

Although the disciples knew that Jesus had been resurrected, they fasted from living into the full implications of that good news. Fishing through the night meant that while the disciples toiled at their nets, they fasted. They fasted from belief, from hope, from ministry, from evangelism.

The night is symbolic of the disciples' fast from Christ-focused, hope-filled ministry.

As the new day dawned and the Light of the world penetrated their hearts, their nets were filled, and their fast was over.

"Come," says Jesus, "and break your fast."

I want to suggest there are two take-aways from this.

The fast from which the resurrected Jesus calls us to break, especially during the Easter season, is firstly the fast from our private communion with Christ, and secondly the fast from Christ-focussed, Christ-led, hope-filled ministry.

Firstly, that Jesus showed himself as one who is willing and able to serve our immediate and real needs. Notice that Jesus didn't eat with the disciples. He served them. Notice also that Jesus already had their breakfast ready for them.

Secondly, that the traditional church stuff I brought up at the beginning of the sermon is good and necessary. Preaching, singing hymns, Bible study, church suppers, the Sacraments. These are all good and necessary – just as fishing was good and necessary. They are the stuff of Round-the-Fire ministry. These are the means by which we are nourished by the resurrected Christ through the Holy Spirit. These are the means of grace by which we mature as disciples of Jesus and live more fully into the resurrection hope.

The Round-the-Fire ministry with which we are the most comfortable comprises 1/3 of the commission Jesus has given to us.

The other 2/3rds are comprised of casting the net and inviting others to the fire.

Casting the net is our evangelistic commission to show and articulate that God is real, good, and able to affect positive change; that Jesus and the kingdom of God is good news. Casting the net involves demonstrating and describing forgiveness of sin and the peace that passes all understanding experienced in fellowship with the triune God. Casting the net involves demonstrating and articulating the sure and certain hope in the resurrection to eternal life that forms the foundation of the faith we profess.

Then, Jesus calls us to not only reveal him through our speech, action, and living, but to invite others to join us and him around the fire.

We read last week of Jesus' commission: "As the Father has send me, so I send you." Jesus was sent by the Father to show us the Father and invite us into communion with Him in which fellowship is the peace that transcends even death itself. We cast the gospel nets by showing Jesus, and we invite others to learn, grow, and mature in Him with us.

The fish which Jesus told Simon Peter to bring to the fire did not become part of the meal. Jesus had already prepared enough breakfast for his disciples to be satisfied. The fish Simon Peter brought were the new members of the Christian community. The invitation is for them to join us and Christ around the fire to be nourished and encouraged by the risen Christ.

Yes, the church's influence in society is not as strong as it once was. Yes, our pews are empty. Yes, COVID has exacerbated the situation. But maybe the fault doesn't lie entirely with others.

This is the Easter season. Jesus is risen! The day has dawned, the night is over! Come, and break your fast from hope. Come, and break your fast from ministry. Come, and break your fast from belief. Come, and break your fast.
Amen.

Hymn: #753 "You walk along our shoreline"

We respond in prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Lord Jesus Christ,
You came to us bearing God's love,
to walk with us as our Good Shepherd,
showing us how to love each other.
You pray with us and for us day by day.
Today we turn to you with our hopes and concerns in these uncertain times.
Draw near to us and to all those for whom we pray,
so that your love will be known in our world this day.

Lord Jesus,
on this Christian Family Sunday,
we pray for the families we belong to.
We thank you for parents, grandparents and great-parents,
for the generations who started our families and all they gave to us.
Today we thank you for all those who mothered us,
grateful for their care and guidance.
We pray for mothers throughout the world,
thinking especially of mothers in Ukraine and other places of conflict,
worried for their children and the future.

Keep a brief silence.

Strengthen every care-giver's hope and courage by the power of your Spirit,
and create peace in the world so children can grow up in safety.
Jesus, our friend and brother,
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
we pray for families in our community and around the world
in these uncertain times.
We remember families in need:
those struggling with economic upheaval and the high cost of living,
those who know sorrow because someone has died or gone away,
those who live in pain or fear, or face some kind of discrimination.

Keep a brief silence.

Surround these families with your love and courage;
bring them support from their neighbours,
and guide each child and young person into the future.
Jesus, our friend and brother,
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
We pray for the family of nations in this time of threat and conflict.
Change the hearts of leaders bent on destruction or conquest.
Give wisdom and courage to those who seek justice through negotiation,
and protect all those who offer themselves in aid and advocacy work.

Keep a brief silence.

Bring peace with justice to this troubled world.

Jesus, our friend and brother,
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus,
We pray for each other and for our church family.
We give your thanks for the friendship and fellowship we share
and the unique gifts each one brings to our life together.
Rekindle our energy for ministry and mission
and show us our path into the future.

Keep a brief silence.

Make us a beacon of hope in your name.
Jesus, our friend and brother,
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, you are our Good Shepherd,
guiding us through dark valleys and green pastures.
We thank you for your presence with us in all times and situations
as we offer together the prayer you gave us as one family of followers:

The Lord's prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn: #767 "Lord, speak to me"

Blessing: