

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Third Sunday of Easter: May 4, 2025

From Easter to Routine

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Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on this third Sunday of Easter.

Let us look at where we have come since that glorious day of Easter. And I do say glorious. We sing, we celebrate, we adorn our worship spaces with beautiful flowers, and we find ourselves “all in” on the Jesus story. Maybe we only come to church a few times a year, and I bet Easter is one of those Sundays. But we all know Monday morning comes, life goes on, and that is where we are today in our scriptures.

Just like us, the disciples have returned home. For the disciples, they have gone back to fishing. As is often said, “after the ecstasy we have to go back to doing the laundry.” So, they’ve moved from the empty tomb to their boats, from the house in Jerusalem to the familiar waters of the Sea of Tiberias. They traveled some 70 or 80 miles from the place of Jesus’ resurrection and gave themselves to their old routine of fishing. They’ve returned to the same boats, the same nets, the same water, the same work. And that’s when and where Jesus “showed himself.”

It’s now two full weeks after Easter Sunday and I’m betting we’ve all returned to the routine of our lives. So according to this scripture, that’s when and where we can expect Jesus to show himself to us. Resurrection does not happen apart from the routines of life, but within them. Resurrection is not about escaping life, but about becoming alive.

The disciples (for some reason) fished through the darkness but their nets were empty. “That night they caught nothing.” The “darkness”, however, was not just about the night sky. The darkness was also in the disciples. In the same way, the empty net is not only descriptive of their fishing efforts, it’s also descriptive of the disciples themselves. They

hadn't begun preaching the Gospel. In fact, they had been on the run since seeing Jesus in the upper room.

They are at this time as empty as their nets. Who here hasn't experienced that darkness and emptiness? You know what that's like. You fish, you work, you do your best but you still come up empty. In those times we have come to the limits of our own self-sufficiency. We have nothing to show for our efforts and nothing left to give. We're empty. That's when Jesus, still unrecognized by the disciples, shows himself and says, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" That's not so much a question as it is a statement.

Nets cannot be filled unless they are first emptied. In the same way we can never be filled with Jesus until we are first emptied of ourselves, until we come to recognize the limits of our own self-sufficiency. The emptiness is not the end or a failure but instead a beginning. The beginning of a resurrection.

Did you notice that all of today's gospel story happens just after daybreak? The dark night of fishing, like the dark night of the soul, has given way to the dawn of a new day, new hopes and new possibilities. The darkness does not win. The light always prevails. In the light of this new day, in the light of a full net, in the light of 153 fish, Jesus shows himself. "It is the Lord!"

This isn't just about the rising of the sun. It's about the rising of the Son of God, of Jesus, in the darkness of the disciples' lives and in the darkness of our own despair. Whatever darkness has overcome you, whatever darkness you might be going through today, that darkness is the circumstances in which Jesus will show himself to you. It is the context for your own resurrection and the raw material from which new life will be fashioned.

When you least expect it, Jesus can show up in your midst. You may not even recognize him, but he will be there in the smile of someone, the tender touch, the right words, the aha idea that you need, the strength you didn't know you had - until you did.

Resurrection is an amazing thing to celebrate, but it is also the creating of the new, even in regular times.

And that brings us to the gathering of a meal where Peter is asked multiple times if he loves the lord, and if so that he feed his sheep. I have no doubt Jesus knew Peter loved him. However, maybe it was Peter who needed to hear it – from his own mouth.

When I preach at Miracles of Faith Lutheran Church in Oakland, I often hear the words ‘Praise Jesus’. But do we? Do we hear ourselves when we say those words whether they are a shout to the heavens or a quiet prayer? Are we carrying the true hope of the Resurrection – the reassurance that God forgives and loves us in our everyday lives?

With each question and answer from Jesus, Peter is getting farther from his past, freer to become himself, and to be more fully alive. Isn’t that really what today’s gospel has been about? It’s the same story being told throughout the Gospel through many different details and circumstances so we can recognize when God’s love shows up in our own lives.

It is two weeks now after the resurrection. Have you seen or felt Jesus? And if you experienced the love of Christ on Easter, are you still feeling the love? Just as Jesus shows up in the oddest of places, at a time when the disciples are going about their own business, back to their normal lives (which I dare say must have been a relief from running scared after Jesus’ crucifixion), they are called to mission. To love one another, to care for one another. To be the shepherd, to feed the flock, to be the light of Christ to others.

Your heart and mind may be back to life as usual – but if you truly look, you will see the resurrection all around you. You will see Jesus even when you don’t recognize him, and there will be abundance if we hear his call to love. Don’t lose yourself in the ordinary. Let Jesus call you into the extraordinary of love and feeding each other. Then, when we listen to Jesus, when we continue to cast out our nets beyond ourselves, only then will there always be plenty of fish in the sea. Amen.