

SERMON FOR SUN. MAY 1, 2022

Easter 3C John 21:1-19 “Before and After”

Dear fellow redeemed of the risen Christ Jesus; Alleluia! He is risen! In our Gospel lesson we heard, **“This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.”**

It is said that repetition is the mother of learning. And so Jesus does not appear to His disciples just *one* time after His resurrection, but *many* times.

For the one thing Jesus wants His disciples of all times and places to know, the one thing (as Paul said) that Christianity cannot do without, is the resurrection.

That yes, Jesus was dead; *really* dead and buried in a real tomb, but now is risen from the dead. And so, sin, its author (the devil), and its wages (death), have all been conquered by Jesus. Because of this, the way things were is not the way things now are. Jesus is making all things new.

New, not by destroying sin and everything sin has infected in a great holocaust and starting over.

Rather, Jesus is making all things new one person at a time. Conquering sin, its author, and its wages through His own death on the cross and His powerful resurrection.

And then conquering sin, its author, and its wages *in you* by giving you His victory in the forgiveness of your sins. That you live a new life. **PAUSE**

Today’s lesson highlights this truth. In it we get kind of a “before and after” snapshot of the way things *were* and the way things *are* with the newness of life Jesus brings.

At the very beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, Peter, James, and John were cleaning their nets after fishing all night and, ***just like we heard today***, had caught nothing.

So Jesus tells them to try again and when they do they catch so many fish that their nets begin to break and both their boats begin to sink.

And when Peter realizes the miracle and the power of God he has just witnessed, he falls on his knees and says, **“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”** That’s the “before” picture.

But in today’s reading, it’s different. Peter is a transformed man. For after *this* miraculous catch of fish, Peter is not afraid. This time, in fact, he can’t wait to get to Jesus!

He puts on his outer garment and before the other disciples know it, Peter’s jumping out of the boat and into the water to swim to Jesus as fast as he can.

Before Easter, Peter knew only the weight of his sin. *Before Easter*, Peter is afraid to be in the presence of God. *Before Easter*, Peter tells Jesus to leave him alone.

But now, after Easter and the peace that Jesus gave (as we heard last week), Peter is forgiven and no longer afraid.

So the first thing to notice about this text is: Jesus has not changed. What He did *before* Easter He now does after Easter.

What changed is us. Jesus' death and resurrection was not to make *Jesus* new, but to make us new. To raise us from sin, fear, and death to a new life in Him.

Not a new super-spiritualized life, but a new life we live out in our various callings, or vocations.

Jesus prayed in the high priestly prayer, not to take us out of this world, but to make us new in this world. And we see that in Peter. He is a changed man. **And so are you.**

And yet it seems there's something on Peter's mind. For right after this, Jesus (who knows and provides what we need) asks him three times: **Simon, son of John, do you love me?**

He asks three times, which mirrors Peter's three denials of Jesus not long before. Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to confess Him. That's the *what* of what's happening here; the question is: *why?*

Was Peter earning Jesus' forgiveness? Absolutely not! Jesus died for Peter's denials on the cross. That's done and over with. Jesus doesn't even bring it up.

But if Peter and you are like me, even after you know you're forgiven, you still have regrets. You still have those nagging voices in your head.

Our Lord may **forgive our iniquities and remember our sins no more**, but it's not so easy for us. We remember.

I *often* forget the good I do, but I often cannot seem to forget the wish-I-could-do-that-one-overs. Those sins Satan uses to haunt and taunt us.

And so, it's not that Jesus was holding his sin against Peter - *Peter* was holding his sin against Peter!

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is yourself.

So Jesus lovingly gives Peter three more chances to confess Him. Again, not because Jesus needed it, but because Peter did.

And did it make a difference? Do we see a new Peter? Well yes, for the Peter who was so afraid of death *before* Easter that he denied knowing Jesus three times, would later go to death on a cross for openly confessing Jesus.

Jesus tells him it will be so. Peter the denier would be Peter the martyr because of the death and resurrection of Jesus was at work in him.

That same death and resurrection of Jesus that is working in you.

We can't know what the future holds, but Jesus knows. And He is preparing you for it. Making you new for it. Just like Peter.

The second thing to take note of in today's text is the term Jesus calls His disciples as they are out fishing. He says to them, **"Children, do you have any fish?"** Children.

They're children here - not disciples, not apostles. For those two titles focus more on **what they do** – they are those who follow, those who are sent.

But *children* focuses on what God has done. Being a child is something that happens to you. You are born or adopted into a family. You can't do anything to make yourself a child

And so while disciple and apostle is the calling given to them and what they did, children is who they are.

That's important because, once again, the disciples had failed! They fished all night and (again!) caught nothing.

They'd denied, betrayed, doubted, ran away, and hid when the going got tough. Sort of like how often we fail in our vocations, in our lives, in the tasks assigned to us.

But that does not change their status as children of God. For children don't have to earn their way into the family or earn their keep in it - they are loved because they are children.

So it is with the disciples, so it is with Paul - who Jesus made His child even though he'd persecuted those who followed Christ, and so it is with us.

We're children of God because we've been made so in Holy Baptism. In those waters Jesus came to us and said: *you are mine*. And so, we are.

And that day was Easter day for us! For on that day we died with Christ and rose with Christ to a new life.

And so these fishermen who don't seem to be able to catch any fish, Jesus will use to be His fishers of men.

And they would be not because of *their* skill and ability, but just as out on the lake, *Jesus* would be working, providing the catch while working through his disciples.

If you ever think you're too much of a failure for Jesus to use you - as a parent, a child, a Christian, just remember the disciples and take heart!

If Jesus wants *them* as His children, then He can transform your life to use you as witnesses as well.

The third thing to take away from this account today is that it is a picture of the kingdom of God coming to us.

This is what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer when we say ***Thy kingdom come***.

With those words we're not just praying for God's kingdom of glory, to come and bring the present world to an end.

No, we're praying for His kingdom of grace to come to us here and now, just as it did, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee that day and to Paul on the road to Damascus.

His kingdom of grace comes to us here today as the Lord comes to us, unworthy as we are, with His Word and Spirit and forgiveness and makes us His own.

Today's readings show us that Jesus is here with us now, bringing His kingdom to us and bringing us into His kingdom. He is active in all our vocations and walks of life.

And most importantly, active for us as He comes to us in His Word and Sacraments, giving us faith, forgiving us, transforming us, and making us new.

PAUSE

And so it is a new Peter who jumps out of the boat and swims to the shore and gets to Jesus soaking wet.

And that's what we'll look like when we get to Jesus, too. Soaking wet from living in the water of our baptism.

Soaking wet from jumping into those waters every day, as every day we confess our sin, receive our Lord's forgiveness and are made new.

As every day we remember that in that water we are children of God, and that the kingdom of God has come to us.

In God's kingdom of grace here on earth, Jesus calls us to **come and eat**. Just as He prepared and provided food for His disciples then, so He has prepared and provided food for His disciples now. *For you.*

His Body and Blood, that we be sustained in the forgiveness and new life He has given us, eating now in His kingdom of grace, until He one day calls us home to His kingdom of glory and the feast that has no end.

Until then, we join the heavenly chorus in their song to the Lord. A new song, by those made new. The song we heard in Revelation, and that we sing in our liturgy: ***Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are His. This is the feast of victory for our God! For the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign.***

For He who lived and died now lives and reigns and is working for us and for our salvation. Just as by the Sea of Galilee that day. Making new one person at a time.

None too old, none too far gone, none does He give up on. He died for all, He rose for all, and He lives for all, that all be forgiven, all be made new. In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.