

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Jesus Appears in Galilee

Sermon Reflection Notes

This week we heard the story of the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples. For someone who had died, Jesus kept showing up with some regularity. Perhaps it was part of the resurrection plan. Perhaps it was just because the disciples needed him. They had been there for the journey, they had heard Jesus's teachings, they celebrated his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. But they also were at the Last Supper, Gethsemane, the tomb. And even after Jesus appeared to them twice in the upper room, they still weren't quite sure what to do next. They had reached the end of their capabilities. They were exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally. The smallest, simplest tasks were too overwhelming to begin. We've been there. When the stories of our lives break down and we cannot do one more thing, we are there.

Rev. Blacksher told us the story of his difficult journey in 2018 when he wasn't well and felt overwhelmed by his new diagnosis and inability to do even the simplest of tasks: take a walk. He pointed out we all have these types of stories: when we lose a job, fall ill, face the death of a loved one, times when we just feel lost and alone.

The disciples did what so many of us do in these moments; they went home. Back in Galilee, they were still raw from Jesus's absence and unable to really see a future for themselves. We can imagine the scene, the disciples all sitting around despondent until Simon Peter decided he was going fishing. It was familiar. It wouldn't require a lot of thought since they were fishermen by trade. It probably felt comforting to have a plan, any plan. So, they went fishing. Except even fishing wasn't working out for them. They sat in the boat all night and caught exactly nothing. How frustrating to attempt something you know how to do well and utterly fail. Of course, that was the moment Jesus showed up.

This third time Jesus appeared, Rev. Blacksher pointed out, he wasn't acting very "Jesus like" at first. Evidently Jesus was standing on the shore heckling the disciples for their lack of fish: "Hey little boys! How's it going out there? Caught anything yet?" Can you imagine? We might have a few choice words in response ourselves, but the disciples went with a simple "No." And then Jesus asked them to try the other side of the boat. He asked them to try something new. To let go of everything they knew and understood about fishing and try it a different way.

Rev. Blacksher said this scripture contains three miracles. The first is the presence of Jesus. He keeps showing up, even in Galilee. The second miracle is that the disciples, before they even knew it was Jesus yelling to them from the shore, listened and cast their nets on the other side of their boat. The third miracle occurred when their nets were filled with fish and the disciples recognized Jesus and began moving, filled with joy and excitement.

And then Jesus invited them to share bread and fish with him for an early morning breakfast that surely was filled with awe and wonder as they learned once more that they had not been abandoned. Jesus was with them. God's grace was available.

And so it is for us. We are disciples of Jesus. We remember, every time we are together, every time we share a meal together, that our lives are grounded in an experience of God's fullness and unprecedented, unexpected gifts. Gifts that come to us even when we feel despondent, even when we cannot fathom the future...gifts and grace that sustain us and move us into the future with hope and joy.

Scripture

John 21:1-14 (NRSVUE)

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Discussion Questions

1. Why, when we are in places of defeat and despondency, does the act of *moving* in some way, doing *something*, often seem overwhelming and yet most often it's the thing people tell us to do? Does it always help?
2. How are we at letting go? What helps us? What hinders us?

3. Rev. Blacksher posed the question: "Are we willing to let go of what we're certain of to be open to what God is doing?" What kinds of things are we certain of?
4. (from *The Sin of Certainty* Peter Enns)
"Letting go of the need for certainty is more than just a decision about how we think; it's a decision about how we want to live. When the quest for finding and holding on to certainty is central to our faith, our lives are marked by traits we wouldn't normally value in others: ...dogmatic certainty, ...monitoring of who's in and who's out, ... preoccupation with winning debates, A faith like that is in constant battle mode, like a cornered honey badger. ...That kind of faith is not marked by trust in the Creator. It is stressful and anxiety laden, and it doesn't make for healthy relationships with others, including those closest to us."
How can certainty reveal fear? How does fear work with faith?
5. Last week's scripture lesson focused more on doubt, this week's on certainty. Why do you think the scriptures invite us to think about both doubt and certainty?
6. Rev. Blacksher pointed out that the Gospel of John is the only one in which Jesus doesn't leave. There is no "Jesus ascends into Heaven" scene in John. The disciples and Jesus are hanging out after breakfast, like so many of us do, having conversations and figuring things out. And then the story ends. We tend to focus on the "lasts" though (the Last Supper, the last words from the cross, etc.). How does the "last breakfast" scene in John offer a different view and lesson?

Closing Prayer

Holy and gracious God, when we find ourselves filled with fear and worry, you continue to show up in our midst. You invite us to imagine a future where you accompany us every step of the way, and where we are assured that you will provide what we need for the journey. Help us to let go when we are certain that we know the right way to move forward, so that we can live toward the joy of new life that you offer. We are grateful for the stories that remind us who we are – your beloved sons and daughters. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

*"Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?"
because they knew it was the Lord."*