

Sermon 042317 The Other Side
Scripture- John 21:1-19
Sermon Title- The Other Side

So here we are on the other side of Easter. It's been a week since the celebration of the resurrection; not to mention 20 centuries since the actual resurrection. The solemn, penitential time of Lenten discipline and sacrifice is past. Easter came along and interrupted us with its power, glory, and transformation. So where does all this leave us? Can it be that we are already forgetting that actually happened?

What did we do after Easter? We went back to our lives. We got on with it. Back to work, back to the life of business and the business of life. Now remember, we are not alone in this. In our gospel reading this morning what did the Apostles do? They went back to work. Peter said, "I'm a goin' fishin'" This is, of course, was his work before the whole Jesus thing happened in his life.

Now, before we feel too bad about getting back to life and work too quickly like Easter didn't change anything. Before we feel bad about the lack of discipleship on our part, let's remember that Peter and the rest of the Apostles were not very good at the profession of Apostleship. They were not very good disciples at the craft of discipling. They were not very good students of Jesus. They never understood what Jesus was saying, they never recognized him, and they never seemed to get it with the Lord. Not to mention the betrayal, the denial, and the falling asleep when he begged them not to, and all the

rest. We may be better at imitating the disciples than we are at imitating Jesus. By the way, if you're not very proud of how good you are at your job, if you think you can be better at the life of business, take a good look at Peter. In every New Testament story about Peter fishing, he's not catching any fish. Yet, Jesus tells him to do something different and bango, he starts catching fish. A carpenter turned itinerant preacher needs to tell the professional fisherman how to catch fish. No wonder Peter was so quick to drop everything and follow Jesus. As a former commercial fisherman myself, and a current disciple, I don't find Peter exactly a poster boy for either endeavor. Peter, in his ineptitude, has somehow become more loveable. Also, did you notice in the reading that Peter was fishing naked? This might be termed a 'What's up with that?' moment in the Gospel. Then, after the coaching from Jesus and the catching of the fish, Peter puts his clothes on to jump in the water, which is an even bigger, 'What's up with that?' moment! You've got to love having Peter in these stories if for nothing else, the entertainment value.

So, the after-Easter Jesus, Saint John tells us, appears on the beach at daybreak. The disciples, of course, don't recognize him. The Risen Christ asks the question, "Have you any fish?" Now Jesus is like a very good lawyer who never asks a question to which he doesn't already know the answer. That's a wonderful question, "Children, do you have any fish?" That's what we call in my business, a preaching point. One

way to look at a question like this is to think of Jesus asking *you* the question. Think of the question being asked of you today in the language of your life. “How are you doing? Are you doing well? How are you getting on with your work? Are you happy and fulfilled in your life? Do you get satisfaction and pleasure from your daily life?”

“Children, have you any fish? Children do you have anything to show for what you spend your life doing? Do you have anything to show for how you spend your time? How are you as a husband, a wife, a parent, a friend, a boss, a coworker, an employee, a student, a neighbor, a citizen?”

Of course, the Apostle’s answer is very simple to the ‘have you any fish’ question: no. The disciples had little to show for their labors. Now, important, Jesus doesn’t judge them or berate them. He doesn’t leave them to their failures. What does he do? He says, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” Try the other side. Jesus is saying to them and to us, try something different. By trying something different, trying the other side, they found abundance. Well, what does that mean for us? Try the other side.

If you are driving to work in the morning with Monday morning knots in your stomach because the so and so boss will be giving you the same old line of you know what; instead of the usual anger and resentment, try praying for your boss on the way to work. If your spouse is telling you one of those long stories that you are really not

interested in, interrupt and ask a question. Remember why you fell in love with that person. If your child says or does something that makes you want to scream, try a hug. If a friend or family member calls just to chat and you are up to your ears busy and want to move them off the phone quickly like usual; give them your ear for a time. Look at others with love in your eyes. Try the other side.

Jesus is teaching us in this story that life on the other side can be very different than it was before. Where there was nothing to show before, there is abundance on the other side. If you happen to be someone who in some manner lacks fulfillment in your life, Jesus is making a simple suggestion. Try the other side. Life on the other side is life ready for you and me. Jesus is teaching us what life is like on the other side of Easter. It is Easter not on the calendar, but in whom we are and how we see ourselves and how we live our lives. If each of us casts our nets on the other side, we let the Risen Christ fill us with such an abundance of joys that the nets of our lives cannot begin to contain them. Isn't that what we are looking for? Why not try it? We only need only try the other side to experience life fully, joyously, and faithfully, here and now.

AMEN