

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fourth Sunday After Easter, May 7, 2023**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 16, 353:1-2, 356:1-6, 363, 367.

Lessons: Exodus 16:2-26, Revelation 21:1-6, Luke 5:1-11.

Sermon Text: John 21:1-14.

. Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today we see apostles of Jesus fishing after his resurrection. We know from Scripture that he spent 40 days on earth after his resurrection before his ascension into heaven. ***“This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.”*** John doesn’t give us a complete timeline, so we don’t know exactly when he appeared to them on this occasion.

At the empty grave the angel had told the women: ***“go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*** Mark 16:7 (NIV)

On this occasion he appears to just a few of them in Galilee.

Jesus used his appearances after his resurrection to prepare his disciples to carry on his work following the ascension. Today we see that

**JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES IN GALILEE**

- 1. Peter decides to go fishing, and**
- 2. Jesus provides a great catch of fish – for the second time!**

This happened at the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. Simon Peter had been a commercial fisherman before Jesus called Peter to follow him. The Gospel lesson you heard today tells details of Jesus specifically calling Peter and Andrew and James and John to follow him. On that occasion, Scripture also records one of the first miracles of Jesus, also involving a great catch of fish. Matthew is much more brief where we read ***“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.”*** Matthew 4:18-20 (NIV)

At that time Jesus performed the first miraculous great catch of fishes recorded in Scripture.

We read in Luke that at that time Jesus ***“said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’”*** Peter was reluctant to do something that Jesus, who wasn’t a fisherman, told him, and he ***“answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken.”*** Luke 5:4-9 (NIV) But Jesus still called Peter to follow him.

There is no mention of Peter fishing between the time Jesus called him to follow him and now. But Jesus had been crucified and although Jesus was now alive again, he had only appeared twice so far within the time span of a week. What about Peter’s sin of publicly denying that he even knew the Lord? He had not had opportunity to make a personal confession to Jesus. He may have wondered if Jesus really forgave him. Did Peter wonder if he should go back to being a commercial fisherman? Had he forgotten that the Lord had called him to be a fisher of men?

The disciples may not have known what to do with themselves at this time.

Remember that Peter denied Jesus three times before Jesus was crucified and scripture says ***“The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.”*** Luke 22:61-62 (NIV) Peter had run to the tomb with John and saw that it was empty but he had not had opportunity to talk to Jesus face-to-face. He would have been with the other disciples behind locked doors on the evening Jesus rose from the dead, and a week later when Thomas was also with them but in such a large group there is little opportunity for personal repentance and absolution.

Jesus had appeared twice, but Peter had no time to talk to Jesus.

Can you put yourself in Peter’s place for a moment? Between his terrible denial of even knowing Jesus, his running to the empty tomb three days later and this appearance of Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, we read nothing about Peter talking with Jesus.

Then comes our text. The disciples had traveled from Jerusalem to Galilee as the Lord told them to do. Peter went fishing and Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John and two other unnamed disciples were with him. Peter would have known that a good time to fish on the Sea of Galilee would be at night. ***“So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”***

Then we read ***“Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.”*** If they had seen someone on the shore, could they have thought that it was just someone wanting to buy fish? Jesus politely asks if they have caught any fish and the answer is ‘no’.

Upon their answer that they hadn’t caught any fish, he tells them ***“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”***

Then John, who in humility speaks of himself as ***“the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’”*** John often speaks of himself this way, recognizing that Jesus loved him in spite of his own sinfulness.

John points out that it is Jesus standing on the shore who had given them instructions for finding fish. It is John who recognizes Jesus more quickly than the rest. Of course, this astounding catch of fish should have revealed the presence of the Lord. John’s first thought is to tell Peter.

Then look at what Peter does. ***“As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, ‘It is the Lord,’ he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.”*** He was anxious to see and talk to Jesus and no doubt to seek the assurance that his sins, especially his sins of denial were forgiven. He abandoned the boat and jumped into the lake to swim to the shore ahead of the rest.

Then ***“The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.”***

When the other disciples reached the shore, they saw that breakfast was already cooking, fish on a bed of coals and bread to go with it. It appears that they were surprised to see the fish cooking, although no one asked where Jesus got it. Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they had just caught. The fire, the fish, and the bread are here through the miraculous power of Jesus.

Peter, anxious to serve the Lord, climbed back into the boat to get the net full of fish. ***“Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.”***

They had an abundant catch of fish, just like the time Jesus performed a similar miracle earlier in his ministry. They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. And now they have a huge catch, and John tells us that it is 153 fish! The actual number seems to have no significance for us except for the huge size of the catch. In this miraculously abundant catch of fish, we also see Christ’s almighty power.

Even with Peter in the boat these men did not have the strength to haul up the net. They simply dragged the net to shore. The weight indicated hints at the size of the catch. Yet this time with this huge catch of fish, the net did not break.

The Lord, having now provided the meal, invited the disciples to breakfast.

They all knew that it was the Lord, and did not dare to ask questions. Jesus now assumed the role of host, feeding them with earthly food.

When Jesus first called Peter and Andrew and James and John to be "fishers of men" he taught them through a miracle that their success did not depend on their own skill. As fishers of men they are to present the truth of God's Word, especially the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. The catching is not up to them, but up to God. They are only to be witnesses for Jesus, and to tell, teach, proclaim, and preach the pure Word of God. It is kind of like what one disappointed fisherman in Minnesota was told when he wasn't catching anything: 'That's why they call it fishing and not catching.' Peter and the apostles were fishers of men. God will do the catching, just as he did in this miracle.

All night long, fishing in the best places, with their own best skill, they had caught nothing, and this is the second time it happened when Jesus was present. Now, for the second time in their lives, their net had been filled miraculously by the Lord

Beside the lake the Lord has provided fish and bread in advance. Let the apostles see and learn again that the Lord himself will feed and care for them as his own chosen and called servants. Their one thought should be to do the Lord's will and his work according to his Word; placing all their bodily and spiritual cares in the Lord's hands.

It was by following the Word of the Lord that they received such great earthly blessings. It is the same way that we receive blessings, both earthly and spiritual, that is, by following the Word of the Lord.

Even though the good and beautiful things that happen in our earthly life are only a prelude to eternal life in heaven, we can be sure that the Lord will provide for our earthly blessings, as we are reminded from Luther's words. He reminds us that "God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in [the fourth] petition [of the Lord's Prayer] that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving." And we know from the first article of the creed "that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him."

The words following today's sermon text tell us of Peter's reinstatement by Jesus as a penitent follower of Jesus who then has the command to feed Jesus' sheep and lambs with the Word of God.

We will especially see in next week's sermon that Jesus used this appearance and this miracle as an opportunity to turn Peter's attention to his Savior and serving him.

Today in this miracle of Jesus we see God's willingness to provide for our earthly needs. But that is not all that God provides. We see from his Word, the Bible, Jesus' willingness to provide eternal salvation, for he is the Son of God "***who wants all men to be saved.***" 1 Timothy 2:4 (NIV)

Lord, teach us to rely upon you for everything! Amen.