

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Second Sunday after Easter, May 8, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)  
Hymns: 211, 210:1-2, 207:1-5, 206, 207:6.  
Lessons: Ezekiel 34:11-16, Acts 10:24-44, Luke 5:1-11.  
Sermon Text: John 21:1-14  
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our celebration of the resurrection of Jesus has come and gone. And what has changed in our lives? Maybe you felt the excitement of the resurrection on Easter as we sang about what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. He has opened the door to heaven for us and conquered death so that when we draw our last breath, there is more – there is eternal life waiting for us because of the grace of God in giving us faith in Jesus Christ who died for our sins and was raised again for our justification.

But where did the excitement go? Doesn't that happen often in our lives? We plan and get ready for some big day or some big event in our lives and then suddenly it is all over. It seems to have no lasting effect on our lives. But shouldn't every day be a big day for the Christian? It is another day in which we can praise our Lord for what he has done for us. It is another day in which we can find opportunities to tell others of the marvelous things God has done for us.

We know that the event in our sermon text is at least one week after Jesus rose from the dead. In the chapter before this text, John told us about the resurrection and Jesus appearing to the disciples behind locked doors on that same evening of the resurrection. Then John tells us about Jesus appearing to the disciples a week later when Thomas, the 'doubting Thomas' was also with them. Then we read "*Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way.*" John 21:1

We might wonder about what the disciples we read about in our sermon text were doing since Jesus' resurrection. Please listen as we hear about seven of Jesus' disciples and what they were doing on a particular day after his resurrection. We hear how

**JESUS APPEARS TO DISCIPLES WHILE THEY ARE WAITING FOR HIM**

- 1. While they were waiting for Jesus' next appearance to them, their lives continued.**
- 2. Their thoughts were not far from Jesus, wondering 'what next?'**
- 3. Jesus blesses them – in the simple way of providing a meal – proving that he can provide everything for them.**

Jesus had told His disciples that He would see them in Galilee after His resurrection. At some time after his second appearance to the assembled disciples a week after the day they discovered the empty tomb, these seven disciples made the journey north from Jerusalem to Galilee. So in our text they found themselves, on a late afternoon, on the shores of the lake which some of them had so often fished in their calling as fishermen. Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, meaning "twin", Nathanael of Cana, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples whose names are not recorded are the seven.

The days and weeks after Jesus' resurrection must have been very difficult for his disciples. Not all of them obviously understood what everything that had happened meant. Not all of them obviously understood what was going to happen. Why do I say that? Just before he ascended into heaven we read ***"So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'"*** Acts 1:6. Jesus was ready to ascend into heaven, to return to his Father and some of them wondered if he was now going to restore an earthly kingdom, to set up an earthly kingdom! That wasn't his goal at all!

We know from Scripture that Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after his resurrection. At the time of his ascension into heaven, he promised the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would then come 10 days later, on the day we call Pentecost.

Jesus' disciples on this day were without a leader. They had not yet received the special gifts of the Holy Spirit which would enable each one to strike out to tell others about Jesus, with the help and direction of the Holy Spirit. In this mood of uncertainty they were standing this day on the shore of the sea of Tiberias (Galilee) when Peter suddenly exclaimed that he was going fishing. Possibly the sight of the boats leaving for the night's fishing had awakened the old love for his former occupation. And the others, rightly considering his words an invitation to join him, promptly replied that they would accompany Peter. The fishing would provide some diversion and might yield an income. So they went out in a boat. But they had no success. As on a former occasion, as recorded in our gospel lesson, they worked all night and caught nothing.

***"Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' 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. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards."*** The dawn of the morning after a night of such toil may well have found the disciples discouraged, and they might have moved their boat toward the shore. And there was Jesus standing on the shore, although the men in the boat did not recognize Him. It was another revelation of His glorified body. Jesus did not reveal His identity at once.

He simply called to them, as you might ask anyone who is fishing: Did you catch anything? Since the answer is 'no', the Lord tells them ***"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."*** And the result was such a huge catch of fish that the combined efforts of the men did not succeed in pulling the net into the boat. The large number and the great weight of the fish were too much for their strength. The first man among the disciples to draw the proper conclusion from this obvious miracle was John. He told Peter: ***"It is the Lord!"*** Peter quickly threw on his coat and jumped into the sea to swim to the shore. Peter had obviously taken off his outer cloak to try to pull the net into the boat. The other disciples came more slowly than Peter, in the boat with the net full of fishes in tow. Scripture says that they had been only about a hundred yards from the shore. All the disciples present knew by this time that they had again witnessed a miracle. They had, in fact, been instruments of the Lord in performing this miracle, and they had again seen the divine power of Jesus.

***"When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' 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. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead."*** While all the disciples came to land the Lord had already started a fire that had burned down to coals and he provided both bread and fish for breakfast.

We see that Jesus is well able to take care of all the needs of His disciples, whether they be small or great. Upon the order of Jesus that they should bring of the fish which they had caught and had now towed to the shore, Simon Peter went aboard the boat, and, we are told that he drew the net up on the beach, an act which required much strength.

From a human point of view, many tasks in the interest of Christ and the Church have seemed impossible, but have proved a comparatively easy matter when undertaken in the fear of the Lord and with the firm conviction that it was the Lord's will.

Two details are emphasized by John, who had once worked as a fisherman: the fact that the net contained a total of one hundred and fifty-three fishes, not small ones, but large and heavy; and that the net, in spite of the great weight, did not tear. These details give us a further picture of Christ's almighty power. This miracle teaches believers of all times that the Lord can and will take care of their physical needs; He will provide their daily bread for them. Their job is but to work in their callings with all faithfulness and not to give way to idleness on the one hand, nor to foolish anxiety on the other. Now that the Lord has provided the meal he invites 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, distributing both bread and fish to them.

Almost every action of the Lord would have reminded the disciples of some incident in the Lord's ministry, and would have made them raise their hearts in thankful prayer for the blessing of His presence. This third appearance to a larger group of disciples led to Jesus quizzing Peter about his love for his Savior and, in the verses following our text, led to Jesus reinstating Peter as one who was to feed the lambs and sheep of Jesus. The other disciples should also have recognized that they, too, had work waiting for them which Jesus had called them to do.

Peter said later: ***"We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen--by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."*** Acts 10:39-41

So we see that the Lord appeared to his disciples while they were waiting for him. The Lord fulfilled his promise to them, just as he fulfills all promises.

So what happens in our lives tomorrow? What is the most important work before us in our lives? Isn't it to live as God's children and to be witnesses for him? Isn't it to point others to Jesus Christ and the eternal life he offers, through our words and through our lives? Like Peter and the rest who went fishing we will all get up tomorrow and say our morning prayers. Then we will go to school or to work and continue with our lives. But I pray that the Word of God has made a difference in our lives today so that it may also make a difference in our lives and the lives of others tomorrow. Amen