

Easter 3C, 2010

Text: John 21:1-14

Title: The Lord's Breakfast

+ INI +

Have you ever had déjà vu? The feeling that you've done this all before?

This morning, the disciples had a bit of déjà vu. You see, this isn't the first time that Jesus has showed up when they were fishing.

The first time came at the beginning of the story. Back when the disciples were first getting to know Jesus. The disciples had been fishing all night and hadn't caught anything. Jesus suggests that they go out into deeper water and try again. When they do, they catch so many fish that the nets start to break.

This second time, Jesus did it again. Once again the disciples were fishing all night. Once again they've caught nothing. Once again Jesus tells them to try again. Once again they have a miraculous catch of fish.

Now there are lots of similarities between these two stories. But there is one key difference. The difference is the reaction of Peter.

The first time, when Peter saw the bursting nets and realized that Jesus was no ordinary man, Peter said, "Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." The first time this happened, Peter was afraid of Jesus, and he wanted Jesus to leave. Peter knew that he was sinful, and he was afraid that being around Jesus would be the end of him.

This second time, notice what Peter does when He recognizes Jesus. He's so excited to see Jesus, that he jumps in the lake and starts swimming. It's like the scene from Forrest Gump, when Forrest sees His old friend Lieutenant Dan on the dock, and he jumps out of the shrimp boat and swims to shore.

Peter was so excited to see Jesus that he can't wait. The first time, Peter wanted Jesus to leave. This second time, Peter just wants to be with Jesus.

So what's the situation for you? Are you afraid to meet with Jesus, or are you ready to jump in the water?

Are you afraid to be around Jesus? You are sinful and He is holy. God punishes sinners, and that can be a fearful thing. Are you afraid that God will be angry with you?

Or is it more than that? Are you afraid that Jesus might actually change you? It could be that you've grown comfortable in your life, and you might be afraid that being around Jesus might make you uncomfortable.

We become quite comfortable in our habits and routines, even if we know they're sinful.

We become used to ignoring the needs of other folks and living for ourselves, and we're afraid that Jesus might want us to change that.

We're afraid that Jesus might actually call us to leave behind our old life to follow Him, and we've grown attached to the boats and nets and the fish.

Look at how Saul was changed in our first reading. He went from one who tried to destroy the church to one of the Lord's apostles, sent to make more disciples.

It's a lot more comfortable to be like Saul than it is to be changed into a Paul.

So how do we change? How do we go from being the Peter who is afraid of Jesus to the Peter who is sopping wet on the shore of Galilee?

Well, what changed Peter? How was Peter different the second time around?

It wasn't his sinfulness. Peter was just as much of a sinner the second time around. In fact, Peter was an even bigger sinner, because He had three years' worth of sins added to the list. And there were some real whoppers in there, too. Three times Peter had denied Jesus. He had fallen asleep in Gethsemane, and ran away with all the rest.

No, Peter was just as much of a sinner the second time around. The difference was that this time, Peter was not just a sinner, he was a forgiven sinner, and that made all the difference.

The first time Peter saw Jesus do the miracle and he knew that Jesus was a powerful person, but he did not know His love and forgiveness. The miracle came to Peter as Law, not gospel. He felt convicted of his sinfulness.

The second time Peter saw Jesus do the same miracle, it came to Peter as gospel, as gift, because Peter was a forgiven sinner.

Peter knew that Jesus had risen and died for him. Peter was there in the upper room when Jesus appeared to the disciples. Peter was there when Jesus spoke His words of peace. Peter was there when Jesus showed him His hands and His side. Peter was there when Jesus breathed on His disciples and forgave them.

All of this changed Peter's fear to faith. Because Jesus died for Peter, because Jesus came to be with Peter, because Jesus forgave Peter, Peter was no longer afraid.

And that's what Jesus does for you, too. Jesus died for you. His death on the cross was for you. The wounds He received in His hands and side and feet were for you. Just like Jesus came to the disciples to deliver that forgiveness, so He now comes and forgives you. Jesus gives you His peace.

And that's what changes your fear to faith. That's what changes you from running away from Jesus to running to Him. It's all because of the forgiveness Jesus won and delivers to you.

It's not just that Jesus died on the cross and rose again, but Jesus came to meet with the disciples and delivered those gifts to them. He then sent them out to forgive sins, so that the gifts of Calvary would be delivered to you, too.

That's what happens here week after week. All the good things that Jesus won for you on Calvary- forgiveness, life, salvation, peace with God and one another- these things are given out here in Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, Holy Gospel, Holy Communion.

Notice that each of our readings culminates in a meal.

With Saul, after he is healed and baptized, He shares a meal with His hosts.

With Jesus, once the disciples make it to shore He's got breakfast ready.

And if we were to keep reading from Revelation, eventually we would get to the chorus from our hymn of praise, "This is the Feast of Victory for our God."

The meal is always the culmination of our meeting with Jesus. He invites you eat and drink with Him. He is the host and He is the meal. He gives you His body to eat and His blood to drink.

In the Lord's Supper (or perhaps we should call it the Lord's Breakfast), the Lord feeds us. On our own, we're like the disciples. Fishing all night with nothing to show for it. All week long out there in the world, without a whole lot to show for it. But in the morning, Jesus comes, and when we see our risen Lord, we're up out of the boat and hurrying to shore. He's got everything ready, so come, join in the feast.