

*Easter 3-May 1, 2022*

*Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish*

*John 21:1-19*

## *“Jesus Knew and Still Knows”*

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.”

What is the next thing you would do after hearing and believing that Jesus is risen from the dead? You likely would just as the disciples of Jesus did. You might go back and do what you were doing before Easter. It would not be surprising for you to return to do something that you know how to do. Something you feel comfortable doing or enjoy doing. When Peter said, “I am going fishing.” he was no longer talking about fishing for people. Peter meant he was getting back in the boat he had abandoned and starting fishing for fish once again. And Jesus knew what Peter and his disciples had gone to do.

The reading for today does not describe Jesus’ first appearance to the disciples after he left his graveclothes behind in the tomb. When Jesus first appeared, it was the afternoon of the first Easter, and the disciples were locked behind closed doors in fear of the Jews. One Jew in particular, Jesus since they had all deserted him. Whether Jesus broke through the locked doors or simply appeared before the disciples by miraculously going through the shut doors, Jesus knew what his disciples needed. Jesus appeared, stood among them, and calmed their fears with these words, “Peace be with you.” Then a week later, Jesus appeared for the second time so that Thomas who wasn’t there when Jesus first appeared would also believe that he had risen from the dead. Not only did Jesus show himself to Thomas, but Jesus put Thomas’ finger in his pierced side. Jesus knew what Thomas needed for him to believe.

Most of the disciples had now seen Jesus two times since he arose from the dead. They had been healing and preaching with Jesus before he died. Now that they believed that Jesus was risen, you might think they would return to what Jesus had called them to do when he said, “Follow me.” However, the disciples were no different than you and I are today. After Easter when Jesus declares his peace to you, we like the disciples are freed to go back to what we have done before. For you, you might be making camping or vacation plans for the summer. You might be running kids to t-ball, baseball, softball, soccer. Maybe you are spending time in your yard, garden, or fields. Jesus didn’t intend for you to stay locked in your homes after Easter. Jesus knows where you might go, and he also knows where to find you just as he did his disciples who had gone fishing.

Jesus knew that he would find his fishers of men back on the water. He found them on the Sea of Tiberias. His disciples weren’t complaining to each other about how poor the fishing was that day. The disciples were happy on the water and as most fishermen would attest, a day of fishing without catching a fish is better than doing almost anything else. Even though Jesus was far enough from the shore so that his disciples couldn’t recognize him and he was too far away to see how many fish were in the boat, Jesus knew how fishing was going when he asked, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” It isn’t hard to imagine Jesus chuckling to

himself after saying this. The disciples admitted their fishing failure. Jesus knew that they didn't catch a few small fish after a long time. Jesus knew that the fish weren't where their nets were. Jesus knew they had been skunked. They had NO fish. To emphasize this scarcity, the word Jesus used means less than "fish". The word has been translated to indicate fish, but it means just something to put on bread. Jesus knew that these fishermen hadn't caught enough to smear on a slice of bread.

Jesus knew where these fishermen could find fish. These fishermen heeded the command of Jesus to cast the net on the other side of the boat. As soon as the net hit the water, the net was filled with fish. This miracle of multiplication from nothing to abundance reminded John who was calling from the shore, and he told Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter slipped on his outer clothes and swam to shore to greet Jesus. The other disciples brought the 153 fish in the boat to the shore. It never mentioned that Jesus had also been fishing or had purchased any fish, but when the disciples had reached the shore, Jesus already had a fish fry breakfast prepared on the charcoal fire.

Once again, the disciples could have been afraid about what Jesus would say to them like when he found them behind the locked doors. He could have scolded them for abandoning him after showing himself for the third time. Jesus didn't say, "That's three strikes, you're out." Instead, Jesus said, "Come and have breakfast." Jesus gave them what he knew they needed.

Another interesting detail appears in this story of Jesus appearing to his disciples for the third time. It is the charcoal fire that the disciples were sitting around as they were eating their breakfast that the Lord had prepared. The last time Peter was next to a charcoal fire, Jesus was about to be crucified and he was warming himself when a servant girl of the high priest recognized Peter and his connection with Jesus. It was then that Peter denied knowing Jesus for the third time. Jesus now knew what Peter needed most. Jesus drew three confessions out of Peter for each time that he had denied knowing Jesus. Peter confessed that although he denied knowing Jesus, he knew that Jesus still loved him.

After Easter, we can often be found going back to what we have done before. It is not uncommon for me, a few times a year, to head down to the barn where I spent many hours milking cows. I flip the light switches on as I had before early in the morning waiting to see how lights are still working. There is a peculiar feeling that overcomes me. I can imagine the stanchions jingling as the cows get up to get their morning grain as they wait to be milked. But soon the reality of the silence and emptiness returns. From now on when I go back to the barn, I will remember this story of the disciples who had gone fishing. After hearing what Jesus said to his disciples, I will imagine Jesus saying to me, "Got NO milk, have you."

It is ok for you too to return to what you were doing before Easter. Jesus knew what his disciples were doing and what they needed. Jesus went looking for his disciples again and provided for them. Jesus knows what you need and will search for you and give you what you need most. Jesus has shown himself to you again today. Jesus reminds you that you have nothing without him. Jesus also reminds you that by his death and resurrection he has given all of himself for you. You are his beloved children. You are forgiven. Eternal life is yours. Amen