

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, “**Friends, haven’t you any fish?**” “No,” they answered. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “**Bring some of the fish you have just caught.**” ¹¹ 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. ¹² Jesus said to them, “**Come and have breakfast.**” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Did you know that there are more than 40 Bible passages in the New Testament that have to do with Christians encouraging one another? I was actually surprised there were that many. Did you realize that encouragement is even a spiritual gift—a certain gift or quality given by the Holy Spirit to some people? Listen to this from Romans 12: **We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (6-9).** We all need encouragement and some people are good at lifting others up—it is their gift. This is true even—and maybe especially—when it comes to our faith in God. We need to be built up, lifted up, reminded...encouraged. Maybe you know someone who is good at doing that for you or others. Maybe you have that gift. But there is no one better than the resurrected Jesus to encourage us just as he did for the disciples who had returned to the Sea of Galilee after Easter. As we see and hear Jesus, we too can

BE ENCOURAGED BY THE RISEN CHRIST

1. GIVE PRAISE FOR HIS POWER AND LOVE
2. BE REMINDED OF YOUR CALLING AS A CHRISTIAN

These events recorded by John in chapter 21 of his gospel took place a week after Easter morning. The disciples had travelled from Jerusalem to their old stomping grounds around the Sea of Galilee up north. Jesus had actually told them to go there and that he would meet them. It was there in Galilee that the risen Christ would encourage these men in their faith and for their work. And the way Jesus went about it is interesting. It may remind us that sometimes God does things in funny ways—ways we don’t expect, ways that get our attention.

So there the disciples were, up at the Sea of Galilee—7 of them anyway. Whether they were bored and needed something to do, decided to try to make a few bucks, or were just hungry, we don’t know, but Peter decided to go fishing and the others offered to go along. They fished all night and didn’t get anything. It was early morning when, from the boat, they heard some man on the shore yell out “**You boys haven’t caught**

anything to eat, have you?” (I know our translation doesn’t look like that, but that’s really the way Jesus said it.) He knew the answer was “no,” of course. **“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”**

For some reason these experienced Galilean fishermen listened to the stranger on the shore. And once they did, his identity was revealed! They couldn’t bring the net in because it was so full of fish. John was the one who realized it was the risen Christ. He yelled to Peter, **“It is the Lord!”** Peter immediately grabbed his clothes and jumped into the water, not willing to wait for his friends, the boat, the 153 fish, nothing! He had to see Jesus! When the boat and the rest of the men arrived on the shore, they found that Jesus had fish on a fire already along with some bread for breakfast.

The power of the risen Christ is obvious in the great catch of fish. How many of us who have spent time in a boat or on the shore or even in an ice shanty would have loved to have that power over creation?! Experienced, professional fisherman on this very lake couldn’t catch anything but Jesus could simply say the word and the net was full because he is the true man—true God, once killed—but alive again, all-powerful, risen Christ!

The love of the risen Christ is also obvious here. He returned to his friends in Galilee just as he promised. He confirmed for them again that he really was alive and that their hope in him as the Messiah was not misplaced. Besides that, he cared for their physical needs by providing their daily bread.

Seeing the power and the love of the risen Christ prompted praise from these men. We reveal how we feel in *the way* we say things, don’t we? When mom or dad tells us to say we’re sorry for doing something, we might reveal our true feelings by saying “*I’m sorry*” grudgingly and through clenched teeth. Our worship folder might tell us to say “Alleluia!”—with an exclamation point—but we may say it with little emotion at all; we sound bored. When we do, do we really mean “Praise God!”? The way we say things can be as important as our words.

There may not be praise words, but there is absolutely praise in John’s voice as he stands in the boat and says to Peter, **“It is the Lord!” “It is the Lord!”—exclamation point!** He was excited that Jesus was with them again. There was faith and feeling behind his words—and they were praise. John was encouraged at the sight of Jesus and the sound of his voice. His trust in the risen Christ had been renewed.

Our *actions* also reveal how we’re feeling, right? If mom or dad tells you to clean up your room or help with the dishes and you don’t really move off the couch too quickly or you’re still holding the video game controller and only eventually get up and slowly make your way to the chore—that’s different than jumping up, tossing your phone or controller onto the couch and sprinting to the kitchen sink or your room. Your actions show your feelings. Peter is the one who praises Jesus without saying a word. His actions tell the story. At John’s word, Peter jumps in the water, swimming and splashing and stumbling from the water onto the shore to see Jesus. He was so encouraged in his faith, so lifted up that he had to greet Jesus—right away!

I doubt that those men retreated to Galilee because they didn't know what to do or that they were returning to their jobs on the sea because that's all they knew how to do. I doubt that they were running away from the work of sharing the message of Christ died and risen for forgiveness and salvation. Certainly we know, as weak sinners, that those were possibilities, but I don't think that's it. Now, they may have been confused about what had gone on, and they may not have had everything straight as far as what Jesus wanted them to do exactly, but Jesus told them to go there and wait for him. That's what they did. And when the risen Christ came to them, they were encouraged as Jesus reminded them of their calling as Christ's followers.

Certainly Jesus talked with them as they shared breakfast on the beach. We wish we had the details of their conversation, but understand that Jesus' mission was to come and redeem the world and then prepare his disciples to share that saving gospel with the world. Jesus would remain for less than six weeks after his resurrection before ascending to heaven. One week had passed already. He had a purpose for meeting with his disciples there. He was encouraging them and preparing them. I wonder if their discussion included how Jesus had first called some of them—at that very sea—after providing a great catch of fish just like he just did this day. How could they NOT have brought up how at that time Jesus called them to discipleship and told them **“From now on you will catch men (Luke 5:10)”?!**

An extremely important conversation went on after breakfast as Jesus and Peter walked along the beach. Jesus took the time to specifically call Peter to share God's word of salvation with others. It was only ten days before that Peter literally swore up and down that he didn't know Jesus or follow him—and then they crucified Jesus. That Jesus took the time to reinstate Peter as one of his spokesmen, to make sure that he knew that he wanted him to share the gospel, was so important.

Those men needed to be encouraged, needed to be reminded of their calling to spread the news that Jesus paid for every sin when he was crucified, and that he really did rise from death, and that eternal life with him was in the future of all who believed that message.

You and I are really no different, you know. We need Easter. We need the special services and the joy. We need to celebrate it together. We need to hear the glorious news that he is risen, that we have a Savior who accomplished everything for our salvation. We need that encouragement for our faith. And, truth be told, we need it every week. Every Sunday we need to hear that our sins—no matter how bad—have been washed away and that because Jesus rose to life, we shall also rise to eternal life.

This glorious, encouraging message of the risen Christ inspires praise to Jesus for his power and love and it reminds us of our calling to be his messengers today. Peter, John and the others are not around anymore. They can't talk to your next door neighbor. They can't invite your friend at work to church. They can't make sure that your child gets baptized and taught about Jesus. They can't go visit that terminally sick

person and make sure they know what Jesus did for them. They can't share faith in Jesus with other college students. They can't do these things...but you can. You are called to share the news of the risen Christ. You are the post-Easter messengers today as the disciples were then!

We might be confused sometimes, and not totally get everything God wants us to, and we might wonder if God would really want us to be his spokesperson, like Peter, but God DOES want us to be the ones to tell people about Jesus. Our calling as Christians is to encourage others with the good news of Jesus and give them the hope of eternal life that we have.

Those disciples were witnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection, so they were well-equipped to go and share the good news. You and I are Jesus witnesses today and we are also well-equipped. We have heard the gospel and believed it. We have had our lives impacted and changed by God's gracious hand. We are looking forward to heaven because Christ rose on Easter. Don't let Easter joy be only for that one day or for a few weeks after or even reserved only for Sundays throughout the year. Live your Easter joy by giving praise to your risen Savior and telling others about salvation in him. Those disciples were encouraged by Jesus and God used them as his witnesses—you can be sure he will use you too! Amen.

Now the grace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.