

June 4, 2017     “Afterward...Number 3”     John 21:1-14

You see, I really do not have a lot of original ideas. I have been saying that we are looking at the resurrection appearances of Jesus because there were many of them...far more than there is time to look at on Easter morning! Although it might be interesting to string them all together like a bunch of beads in an Easter morning sermon! We'll have to see if I can remember that idea for a whole year. The point is that it is here in John chapter 21 that we find the phrases that gave me the idea for this current series. The word that begins the chapter is afterward. And in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse John tells us this was the 3<sup>rd</sup> time Jesus had appeared to the disciples, after HE was raised from the dead...in other words, after Easter morning.

Knowing that repetition is one of the key learning strategies I have repeated this fact. Every Sunday morning worship service is an anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus. The reason we worship on Sunday and not the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) is because we are a resurrection community. The defining point of Christian understanding is that Jesus was crucified to save us. That HE died, was buried, and rose from the dead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day...which was Sunday, the first day of the week.

Every detail of John 21 reminds us that after Jesus was raised to life, HE continued to appear to the disciples, His

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followers. And as surely as the number of the disciples included the 12, who became the 11, and then elected someone from the larger number of 120, to replace the fallen Judas...is this fact. From the moment the resurrection had occurred somewhere around 120 souls gathered in community to worship and pray. And they made certain they gathered on Sunday, to mark the day of Jesus rising.

Jesus appearances continued to occur after that special Sunday we recall with our Easter celebration each year. John 21 tells us the third episode after Easter's occurrence. It is clear with each of Jesus' appearances the disciples' faith in HIM is evolving, growing, becoming sounder and sounder. Faith is becoming substantial. Faith is becoming rock-like, as they continue to grow in their recognition that Jesus is Lord and God.

From the first revelation of Jesus having risen from the dead there was this instruction to the disciples to go to Galilee that Jesus would meet them there. John 21 delivers the answer to the question 'when did that occur?' After Easter. The 3<sup>rd</sup> time that Jesus appeared to the 11, after HIS rising from the dead.

When one stands on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, particularly after sunset, the lights of the homes and

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businesses in the city of Tiberius are obvious, on the western shore and rising up the hills that are part of that western view. We are told in the first verse of John 21 that the location for the episode is the Sea of Tiberius. We know that fresh water lake better by the name of The Sea of Galilee. Tiberius was a city of gentiles, primarily but not exclusively Romans. The city was named after the Caesar of the time of occupation of Judea. It is not inaccurate to say the Jewish name for the lake is the Sea of Galilee. The Romans and Gentiles (non Jews), would call it the Sea of Tiberius. It is interesting that nick names are part of the listing of the disciples who were present. Simon Peter...Simon the rock. Thomas Didymus...doubting Thomas, Nathaniel from Cana (the water into wine village), the sons of Zebedee...James and John and two others. Even within the circle of the 12 there was obviously an awareness of rank, movers and shakers and...others.

So according to my count, John tells us there were 7 of the inner circle present on this occasion. And while they have come to Galilee and that means they do not have to lock their doors for fear what the Romans or the Rabinical Council of Jerusalem might be planning, not a lot is happening. They are sitting and standing around waiting for... for what might occur. And it is not apparently occurring. Peter announces his cure of

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boredom. "I'm going out to fish." Some of the others present were also formerly fishermen. It is easy to see how they came to a conclusion of "stick together". Count me in, they say. And they fished all night...casting the nets, hauling them in. Nothing. They caught nothing. It was routine they enjoyed. The time passed.

Early in the morning, shortly after sunrise, they can see someone on shore. They did not realize or recognize who it was. He calls out to them. "Friends, do you have any fish?" They reply. Nothing to sell, nothing to share. The stranger on the shore calls back, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." When the disciples of Jesus cast the net, the result is immediate. The net is so full they cannot haul it. It is John (the disciple whom Jesus loved) who says... "It's Jesus." In fact he nudges Peter, and his voice is probably just a whisper... "It is the Lord." Peter grabs his robe, puts it on, dives in the water and starts swimming for shore...leaving the others to manage the boat, to handle the net, and this spectacular catch of 153 big ones!

We are not given any detail about Peter's swim. After all, it is John's story. So we are told the disciples in the boat managed without Peter's help to get the boat and the net full of fish to the shore of Galilee. There are a number of

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marvelous details. The net did not tear in spite of the size of the catch. Jesus has a fire going...and there is fish cooking over the fire. Jesus invites the disciples to add to the cooking of the meal, to share some of their fish, with HIS. It is a story remarkably like the story of Jesus calling the disciples in the first place...those who were fishermen. There is a sense in which it is a story of affirmation by Jesus of every one of the disciples who were present. And that is what this 3<sup>rd</sup> appearance of Jesus after resurrection Sunday was really all about. We will turn to John's telling us about Peter and Jesus next week. Let us pray.

Dear Lord;

We thank you for the reminder that you appeared to the disciples a number of times. We thank you for the reminder as well, that the apostolic faith, is celebrated by the apostolic church. That YOU call and choose the leaders. That you stand by your choices. That no matter how weak or inadequate we may feel we are, YOU are confident in our ability to serve, when we recognize you and the reality of your Lordship. Continue to bless your church with faith in turbulent and trying times. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.