

April 15, 2018
North East United Methodist Church
3rd Sunday of Easter
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberius, and He manifested Himself in this way. Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So, Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So, they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So, when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work) and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

So, when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

-John 21:1-14

Jesus once more appears to the disciples...this time to seven of them...Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John (*the sons of Zebedee*), and two others, who go unnamed, but are believed by many theologians to be Phillip and Andrew.

The disciples are confused, unsure, still grieving as their friend, Jesus, no longer walks alongside them...so Peter

decides to go back to what he knows...finding comfort in the familiar...

...perhaps out on the sea, throwing out the nets, the rocking of the boat...perhaps this is a place to think for Peter..." *What's next?*"..."*Where do we go from here?*"...

...or perhaps the boat, its nets, and the quest for fish is an escape from such questions...perhaps Peter just wants to quiet his mind after the roller-coaster ride of emotions the previous week has produced...

V. 3 - "*Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.'*" The others join him out on the Sea of Tiberius.

The seven disciples fish all night and catch nothing. Then, V. 4 - "*But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach...*"

Jesus calls out to them, "*Children,*" (*paidia* in the Greek), "*...you do not have any fish, do you?*" Jesus calls them His children...He cares and loves them as His own...

Jesus tells them, V. 6 - "*Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.*"

Often, like the disciples, we try to accomplish things on our own, in our own ways, casting the net on the side of our boat that we prefer...our effort bringing few results...yet,

one Word from Jesus...one act of obedience to that Word...following God's directions...His ways...produces results that we could not find on our own...

Often, like the disciples, periods of night seem long...despair sets in...grief, depression, anxiety...darkness seems to cover us and we ask where is God...

He comes in the morning...and when He shows up He will dispel the darkness and bring new life where there has been drought...He will feed, in His time, all those who seek and obey Him...

And in such moments...if we will open our eyes, take our attention off ourselves, our situation (note that *"the disciple whom Jesus loved"* was not focused on the net full of fish but was looking to the shore)...if we open our eyes and take our attention off ourselves, look outward, upward...we will recognize that Jesus is in our midst...even in the ordinary...such as a day of fishing...Jesus is with us...as the psalmist cries out, *"Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?"* (Ps. 139:7).

V. 6-7 - *"And He said to them, 'Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.' So, they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.'"*

I want us to really focus on what happens next. V. 7 - "*So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work) and threw himself into the sea.*"

John uses the Greek word, "*gumnov*" to refer to Peter's appearance before he put on his outer garment and dove into the sea. "*Gumnov*" is translated by many Biblical scholars as "*naked*".

Many interpreters have been puzzled by John's use of this word because Peter was certainly not "*naked*"... nakedness would have been offensive to Jewish sensibilities...most likely...as he was fishing...he would have been wearing a loincloth or loose-fitting undergarment...Believing he was inadequately clothed to meet the Lord since any greeting was considered by Jewish law to be a religious act and therefore could not be performed unless one was clothed...Peter put on his outer garment...

Why would John use the word, "*gumnov*" or "*naked*" if Peter was obviously not naked?

Let's look at Genesis, chapter 3...a section of the story of Adam and Eve...

Adam and Eve eat of the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden...the tree God told them, "*You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die*" (Genesis 3:3).

Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit and Genesis 3:7 tells us, "*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.*"

Their eyes have been opened and they have discovered that they are naked. Adam and Eve have covered themselves with fig leaves sewn together, probably similar in size and covering to a loin cloth.

In Genesis 3:8-9 - "*They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so, I hid myself.'*"

When God appears, Adam and Eve hide. They hide for they are filled with shame because of their sin, their disobedience...they are filled with shame and cannot stand before God.

Contrast this to Peter, the one who denied Christ three times. If any disciple, anyone, had reason to be filled with

shame, to not be able to stand before God, before the Christ, it was Peter.

When Christ appears in this natural setting, along the Sea of Tiberius, rather than hide Peter jumps and runs to Christ. John 21:7 describes the moment, *"So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work) and threw himself into the sea."* Peter does not allow his shame to stop him from moving toward the one he loves.

Do you see the difference? Do you see what has happened?

The power of sin...the power of guilt...the power of shame...has been broken. Christ through His death on the cross...through His resurrection...has made it possible to run to Christ, no matter what we have done...Regardless of our sin we can experience His forgiveness and be welcomed into His arms...through His death on the cross...through His resurrection...we no longer have to hide...we can leap toward healing, toward hope, toward love...

A little boy visiting his grandparents and given his first slingshot. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit his target. As he came back to Grandma's back yard, he spied her pet duck. On an impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck fell dead. The boy

panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the wood pile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all, but she said nothing.

After lunch that day, Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you, Johnny?" And she whispered to him, "Remember the duck!" So, Johnny did the dishes.

Later Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing., Grandma said, "I'm sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper." Sally smiled and said, "That's all taken care of. Johnny wants to do it." Again, she whispered, "Remember the duck." Johnny stayed while Sally went fishing. After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally's, finally he couldn't stand it. He confessed to Grandma that he'd killed the duck. "I know, Johnny," she said, giving him a hug. "I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave of you."

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit they became "*slaves*" to their guilt, their fear, their sin...they became shackled by it...they suddenly found themselves hiding from a pure and Holy God...

But not Peter...Christ has ushered in a new era..."*It is finished*" ...God's plan has come to completion...

forgiveness...salvation...grace...have been made available...Peter will not be a "slave" to the sin he committed...a "slave" to regret, guilt...a "slave" to that night when he denied Jesus three times...

Peter does not allow his nakedness to stop him...like Adam and Eve he covers himself but unlike them he does not allow his nakedness, his shame, to keep him from Jesus...He dives in headfirst...swims to Jesus...and it is there he finds love, compassion, forgiveness...

The Rock has been rolled away...death has been defeated and so has shame...so has regret...so has the burden and debt of our sin...V. 12 - *"Jesus said to them [to Peter], 'Come and have breakfast.'"*

Are any of you living as if you are "slaves" to your past mistakes, your shame, your sin? Do you carry it around? Do you ever find yourselves, like Adam and Eve, hiding from God, staying home from church, feeling unworthy to worship or to pray...feeling unworthy of God's love?

Ken Houts, in his book, Maximize Your Influence, writes, *"Every time the devil comes before God to accuse you of sin, the Father looks at you. However, He does not see the sin; the only thing He sees is the blood of Jesus. So the devil says, 'God, do You see what he/she has done?' And the Father says, 'I don't know what you are talking*

about Mr. devil. I don't see anything but the blood of My Son."

So, what does the devil do? The devil descends and sits upon your shoulder, and begins to remind you of your sin, your mistakes, and your failures.

Houts writes, *"He [the devil] continues to beat you over the head with the rubber hose of condemnation until you believe more in the power of your sin than the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. After a while, you take that rubber hose of condemnation out of the devil's hand and begin to beat yourself over the head when you say, 'You know what, Mr. devil? You are right. I am horrible. I don't deserve God's best.'"*

The empty tomb, the resurrected Christ, tells us to STOP THIS THINKING... we must conquer those thoughts that would steal our joy...by focusing and speaking aloud what the *"blood of Jesus"* has done for us.

We testify that through the blood of Jesus we have been redeemed out of the hand of the devil (Ephesians 1:7); our sins are forgiven (I John 1:9); we are continually cleansed from sin (I John 1:7); we have been made righteous, just as if we had never sinned (Romans 5:9); we are set apart for God (Hebrews 13:12); and because of Jesus we can enter into the presence of God with boldness (Hebrews 10:19).

As Houts writes, *“While you are beating yourself up for your sin, beating yourself up for failing, for the mistakes you have made, saying the same thing the devil has been saying to you, God declares from Heaven, ‘You are not guilty. You are not guilty.’”*

Christ stands on the shore and calls to us...like Peter, will we give our shame to Christ, confess our sins, have those sins covered by His blood and sacrifice...will we jump out of the boat and swim to Him and experience His grace...

I love the song, "No More" by Josh Wilson... just listen to some of these lyrics...

*Oh, I know it all too well
Every inch inside this cell
I'm a prisoner of the choices I regret
The debts already paid
And the bails already made
So why do I keep coming back again?
God I'm done with holding on
To sins that you have saved me from
I'm ready to let go of who I've been*

*No more guilt, no more shame,
no more thinking I can't change
Who I was is dead and gone,
who I am is moving on*

*Saved by grace held by love
because of what your cross has done
You pulled away the prison doors
Hallelujah God
I am condemned no more
I am condemned no more*

*So, I step out of the night into your burning light
Where my past and all its shadows disappear*

Stop carrying the burden of your past...confess it to God once and for all...let it go never to pick it up again...

Stop hiding...jump in headfirst, nakedness and all, knowing that Christ will greet you, will take you in, will clothe you in white, and will love you as His child...

Give shame no room in your life...give regret no room...give the past no room...as Wilson sings, "*step out of the night into [God's] burning light*" and allow your "*past and all its shadows [to] disappear.*"