“Come and Have Breakfast”
Dr. Robert Bardeen
Ward Parkway Presbyterian
April 21, 2019

Why should we listen to another Easter story about the resurrection of Jesus?

For those who don’t usually attend church, it’s a legitimate question. Maybe the Easter and Christmas stories are the only ones you get to hear. You might be here out of courtesy or maybe because of family obligation. Unless you have a personal relationship with Christ, this story might not make sense to you, but I encourage you to listen to end of the story when Jesus calls his disciples to come and have breakfast with him. It’s quite an invitation. It might be just the thing you need.

For those who attend church on a regular basis, I think we are always ready for another resurrection story. It’s about power. It’s about love. It’s about an offer from the Risen Christ to have breakfast with him.

Whatever the case, let’s enjoy this story of the Risen Jesus with the fishermen!

John 21:1-14

1 Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as 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.

So far, on the Sunday morning, the Risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden (John 20:11-18). On Sunday evening, he appeared to all of the disciples except for Thomas (John 20:19-22). Then, a week later, he appeared to all of the disciples including Thomas (John 20:24-29).

This account in John 21 happens north of Jerusalem at the Sea of Galilee, the birthplace of Peter and several of the disciples. John uses the word “afterward,” but does not state how exactly long it has been since the last resurrection appearance. Probably it was long enough to make some of the disciples restless.

Peter boldly proclaimed he’s not going to wait any longer. “I don’t know what else to do, so I’m going fishing.” Once a fisherman, always a fisherman.

Six other disciples decided to go along with him: Thomas, Nathanael, James and John (the two sons of Zebedee), and two others who are not named.
That night they caught nothing. Lots of interpreters preach about that last word “nothing,” but I don’t. I would rather allow the text to speak to us about the human events, and not spiritualize the story.

They went fishing and caught nothing. Period! Plenty of fishermen have experienced this kind of failure.

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.

The Risen Jesus joined them. It was early in the morning and time for breakfast. They didn’t recognize him - maybe because of the sun, maybe they were sleepy, or maybe because they were one hundred yards away from Jesus.

The question by Jesus probably irritated the fishermen. The Greek word for “friends” is a light hearted word, almost like he called them “young boys.” They answered with a blunt “no,” maybe a rude response. Most likely they wanted the one who questioned them to just go away.

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.**

Think about the request by Jesus for a moment. Fishermen were right-handed. Back then, to be left-handed meant something was wrong with you, so all left-handed people back avoided telling anyone. They attached the net to the hooks on the left side. They threw the net with the right hand in the strength position. Changing to throw on the right side of the boat meant they had to remove the net from the anchoring hooks and move to the right side of the boat.

Probably some of them grumbled, “Why is he telling us what to do?” But maybe others thought, “Maybe he’s a long time fisherman in the area. Maybe he saw a school of fish on the right side.”

Whatever the case, they did as suggested and caught a large number of fish. We will hear about the number in a few verses. The net was so full they were unable to haul the net into their boat.

Dale Bruner in his John commentary suggests that Jesus made two statements to the disciples that are quite relevant for us today. A count a total of four positive statements.

- How are you doing?
- I’ve got a suggestion.

If you are close to Christ, you will hear those two questions often.

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. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

This disciple, of course, is the writer of this gospel – John, who always chooses to remain nameless. He did so in verse 2, and other verses as well (John 13:23, 19:26, & 21:20). But John, the youngest, and maybe the one with the best eyesight, recognized Jesus first and yells, “It’s the Lord!”

Then everything happens: Peter jumps into the water and walks to the shore. It wasn’t deep, plus no one knew how to swim back then. The others got out the oars, dragging a net full of fish. I’m sure it was quite a scene.

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.”

Upon landing, the hurried disciples saw a calm Jesus barbecuing breakfast. He had started a fire and prepared some bread dough and fish. Back then, they cooked the whole fish over the flames and the dough was placed on a hot stone nearby to bake. It turned out like fried bread.

Then Jesus asked them to offer some of their fish for the common meal together. “Bring some of what you caught.” He wanted the disciples to participate in breakfast. It’s a third positive word to the disciples.

I’d like to use what you have.

11 So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

Peter, always ready and willing, gets the net and drags it ashore. It was heavy with 153 large fish!

Many interpreters have proposed their theories about the number 153.

St Augustine thought there were 153 kinds of fish at the time. Of course, today we know that there are about 25,000 species of fish.

Others think the numbers 10 (Ten Commandments) and 7 (seven days of Creation) are special and could be added together to become 17, a triangular number. If you place 17 golf balls in a line and then 16, then 15, and all the way to one at the top. If you add all of those numbers, it totals 153. Take out your smartphone and add the numbers from 1 to 17. It will be 153!

Still another person proposed multiplying 7 days of creation times 10 Commandments, and multiplying 12 disciples times the Trinity. Then, add those two numbers along with 40 days in the wilderness, and the 7 spirits in Revelation. It totals 153.
I have a better idea. John, a young man at the time, was so interested in the number of fish that he counted each one, and the total was 153.

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.

“Come and have breakfast.” What a great invitation! “Let’s have a meal together.”

It’s at meals that people freely talk with each other, and get to know each other. Big decisions are often made during meal times. Confessions are heard, and feelings are shared.

Jesus, not only wants to talk with them, he wants to eat with them as the Risen Lord. He’s alive and wants to have breakfast with them. Here’s the fourth positive word for the disciples.

Let’s eat together.

There’s something very personal about this invitation. His presence goes beyond being their teacher and Lord. Jesus wants to be their friend. Jesus wants to be their companion and desires their companionship.

Thirty-five years ago, I heard a poem at a Christian retreat. Maybe you have seen this poem before. It’s been around since the 1880s, but it reached popular culture in 1980. At the time, I had never heard it, and the message was quite helpful for me.

Footprints in the Sand.
One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."
He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."

Sometimes Jesus just walks with us and sometimes he carries us.

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.

The language of this meal is very similar to the language in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:11). "Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish."

These verses also echo the Last Supper as Jesus took the bread, broke it, gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples in the Upper Room.

Notice the multiple roles of Jesus.
   He started the fire.
   He obtained the fish.
      He prepared the bread dough.
      He barbecued the fish.
      He baked the bread.
   And finally, he served the men – personally.

This historical moment is a human moment and a divine moment. It’s early in the morning. The men are hungry. The Risen Jesus does everything for the disciples, and all they have to do is just receive breakfast and enjoy this time with Jesus.

Jesus wants to spend time with us.
   He wants to have a meal with us.
      He wants to weed the garden with us.
      He wants to work with us at our jobs.
      He wants to breathe with us if we are homebound.
      He wants to walk with us as we exercise.
   He wants to suffer with us in the hospital.
   He wants to cry with us when we are sad, and laugh with us when we are glad.

In summary, let’s put the four statements by Jesus into scriptural language, and then in common language.

“Friends, haven’t you any fish?” How are things going?
“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” Try this!
"Bring some of the fish you have just caught." I’d like to use what you have.
“Come and have breakfast!” Let’s eat together!

“Friends, haven’t you any fish?” How are things going?
“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” Try this!
”Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” I’d like to use what you have.
“Come and have breakfast!” Let’s eat together!

“Friends, haven’t you any fish?” How are things going?
“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” Try this!
“Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” I’d like to use what you have.
“Come and have breakfast!” Let’s eat together!

I think each of us can find ourselves in these four statements by Jesus.

How are things going?
Try this!
I’d like to use what you have.
Let’s eat together!

Jesus is interested in your progress, the condition of your life, and your health - your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. If your heart is open to Jesus, he has some questions for you because he wants to know how you are doing.

Jesus is willing to provide some ideas for you - some new paths, some new thoughts, and maybe some new perspectives on old problems. But he doesn’t force you or manipulate you! Jesus gives you the freedom to say “no” and the freedom to say “yes” to his will for our lives.

Jesus has power and wants to participate with you - who you are and what you are doing and what you have to offer. It’s a cooperative effort.

And lastly, Jesus just wants to eat with you, have a meal with you, and laugh together. He desires your fellowship. He likes you, and loves you dearly.