

Sermon Text: John 21:1-14 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: ² Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." ⁶ And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. ⁹ Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" -- knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴ This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Sermon Theme: Jesus' Resurrection Appearance at the Sea of Tiberias

- 1. He reveals His glory as the Living Lord.**
- 2. He gives an important lesson with the miraculous catch.**
- 3. He demonstrates His power and faithfulness to provide for His servants.**

In the name of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus dear fellow redeemed;

On Easter Sunday morning, the angel who rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb announced to the women that the wonderful reason for the empty tomb was Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Then he instructed them to bring this good news to the disciples in Jerusalem and tell them Jesus would come and appear to them in Galilee. As the women made their way back to the city, Jesus appeared to them in His risen form and repeated the instruction to let the disciples know of His coming appearance in Galilee.

Now, we know that Jesus showed Himself alive to His disciples a number of times before the Galilean encounter. Why then, was there a special reference to His coming to them later on in Galilee? Since Peter was singled out as one to be especially told of this appearance, one major reason for this particular appearance of the risen Lord Jesus was to restore Peter to his apostolic office which he had forfeited by his threefold denial of Jesus. In addition to this, the Galilean appearance had special significance to all of His disciples, including you and me.

While the disciples waited for Jesus in Galilee, at Peter's lead they decided to make good use of their time by going fishing. This wasn't sport fishing like we do when we go out and try to catch a mess of fish to eat for a meal. The disciples went out equipped with a large net like they were used to doing when they were making a living from commercial fishing. They also drew upon their experience in deciding to go out and fish in the shallows in the evening hours, since this was the best place and time for fishing. But after fishing through the night, they came up empty.

Off on the shoreline there was an individual the disciples didn't recognize to begin with. Speaking like one with authority in the way He addressed the disciples, He inquired about the results of their fishing efforts. After hearing about their results, He told them to cast their net on the ride side of the boat. He assured them they would be successful in catching fish there. Lo and behold, their net drew in such a large catch of fish they couldn't even bring it into the boat. Instead, they had to pull the net full of fish to shore.

In response to this extraordinary catch of fish which came at the direction of the person on shore, John said, "It is the Lord!" And when Peter heard it was the Lord Jesus, he jumped in the water and swam to shore in order to see Him. This miraculous catch of fish no doubt reminded the disciples of yet another miracle catch Jesus blessed them with at the beginning of His ministry when He called these disciples to become fishers of men.

This miracle like all the other miracles of Jesus revealed His glory as God. And in this case, it served as a sure testimony to His followers that this was the living Lord and God. This blessed truth can not be emphasized enough. For to know Jesus by faith as the living Lord and God is to have the confident assurance we have a Savior God in Jesus Christ. When Jesus raised Himself back to life from the grave, He showed Himself to be the Lord who alone could carry the heavy load of all our sins on the cross and the Lord who alone could make full satisfaction for them through His sufferings and death on the cross. Only the Lord Jesus could conquer sin, death, and hell in order to give us life and immortality.

The devil knows full well how critical the Christian teaching of Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead is for us. He knows this is what blesses us with the peace and comfort of knowing God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ and having the sure and certain hope of eternal life in heaven. And so, we find his human agents trying to raise questions and doubts in our minds about Jesus being the living Lord. A report of finding a burial crypt of bones with the names of Jesus, Mary and a youth inscribed on it is a good example of that. The Lord Jesus, knowing what the devil would try to pull on us and therefore wanting us to know of surety that His bones are not lying lifeless in the earth, He appeared alive in the flesh to many hundreds of eyewitnesses and gave many infallible proofs that He is our living Savior God. This miraculous catch of fish is one of those undeniable proofs which give evidence of Jesus being the living Lord.

With Jesus' redemptive work being fully complete, the Lord used the remaining days of His visible stay on earth preparing His disciples for their important work of seeking after precious souls for His kingdom. The miraculous catch of fish could serve as a symbolic picture,

reminding Christian witnesses both then and now of the powerful and gracious hand of the Lord at work in giving the increase in the work of being fishers of men.

The fruitless efforts of the disciples fishing all night long on their own calls to mind how vain and foolish it would be for any of us to rely upon our own efforts and human devices in making disciples of all nations. And yet, what do we find being employed in the modern day church? We hear of slick promotional programs, the use of marketing devices and the development of religious packaging and formats devoid of preaching Christ crucified which is all considered to be appealing in bringing in the masses.

What does the Lord Jesus tell us to do in being fishers of men? He gave us this command, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mk. 16:15) Even as He told the disciples to cast out the net on the right side of the boat and then proceeded to bless them with a bountiful catch, so also the Lord tells us to cast out the gospel into all the world, proclaiming the message of forgiveness and salvation through the crucified and risen Savior Jesus Christ. And He will bless the effort by gathering precious souls into His kingdom.

While the gospel of Christ is not appealing to the natural, unconverted man and is regarded as foolishness to the worldly wise and a stumbling block to those who are seeking after signs, nevertheless it is the very power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Through the simple gospel message cast out into the world the Spirit of God lovingly ensnares the hearts of people by shedding light in their sin-darkened minds so that they are enabled both to see and believe in Jesus as their Savior. The Lord was speaking of the powerful effect that His Word can have on the hearts of unbelievers when He said in Isaiah, “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10,11)

Another important lesson that can be drawn from the miraculous acts of Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias is the Lord’s power and faithfulness to provide for the servants in His kingdom. In the miracle catch Jesus blessed the disciples with 153 fish. And these weren’t a lot of small young fish. No, the gospel account reports that the net was full of large fish. This huge amount of keepers was more than what the disciple might need for a fish fry for a meal. This multitude of large fish could be brought to the fish market and sold for a fare amount of money. Were they to sell the fish in the marketplace the proceeds could be used to support the apostles as they began their full time work of preaching and teaching the Word of Christ.

Not only did the Lord Jesus supply the disciples with this financial resource through the miracle catch, but when the disciples came to shore, Jesus already had a meal prepared for them with fish frying over a hot bed of coals and bread to go with it. Although we are not told the details as to how Jesus worked this out, we know that He could have very easily used His divine power to quickly have this meal on hand to satisfy the disciples’ need for food.

These mighty acts by the Lord Jesus are a clear demonstration of His power and faithfulness to provide what His church needs to carry on its work on earth. As the Lord tells us

in Matthew chapter 6 not to worry about what we are going to eat or what we are going to wear, since He not only knows what we need, but also will satisfy those needs just as He takes care of the birds of the air and the flowers in the field, so we confidently trust that He will most certainly see to it that His church is well supplied and supported.

While the Lord could do this in a supernatural, miraculous way anytime He sees fit to do so, He most commonly provides temporal support for His church by blessing the hearers of His Word with financial and other resources and then moving our hearts through the gospel to generously share what we have been blessed with for the work of the kingdom. Mindful of this, we must confess we haven't always contributed toward the kingdom work according to what the Lord has blessed us with. When and where we have fallen short, may God have mercy upon us and forgive us for Jesus' sake, and move our hearts to do all that we can for the sake of the kingdom.

In our congregation, as well as in our synod, we are very much aware of the need for the Lord to bless our fellowship with adequate financial support. This past week various boards of our synod met in Eau Claire to discuss important matters in our joint church work, such as making decisions on budget matters that affect the mission field.

Just as the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias witnessed the power and faithfulness of the Lord in supplying their needs for the kingdom work, so also we look to the Lord to do the same in our day. May He give us faith in His continued blessings so that we never sell Him short in what He can do for us or be fearful in taking bold steps in doing what is necessary for the good and advancement of His kingdom.

Praise be to Jesus for revealing His glory as the living Lord through His resurrection appearance and His miraculous acts at the Sea of Tiberias, thus assuring us we have a Savior God who ever lives to cleanse us of our sins and give us eternal life. May God help us to remember the important lessons in being fishers of men that our work is to cast out the saving net of the gospel of Christ and the Lord's work is to gather the precious souls into His kingdom by blessing them with saving faith. Finally, pray that the Lord would continue to pour out His bountiful blessings upon us and move our hearts by His redeeming love to meet the needs of the kingdom which God lays before us. Amen.