



LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS

Of Feeding
and Following

SUNDAY, MAY 1, 2022
COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sermon for Sunday, May 1, 2022
“Of Feeding and Following” | Third Sunday of Easter
Pastor Clara Thompson | John 21:1-19

One of the fond memories of summertime that I carry with me from my childhood is fried perch for breakfast. If the fishing had been successful the day before, the next morning my mother would take the fish, roll it in flour, fry it in butter until it was a nice golden brown and serve it for breakfast. Now THAT was a summer breakfast at the lake. So when Jesus, the Risen Christ, greets his friends one morning on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, with the charcoal fire going and the fish nicely cooking, it causes the child in me to remember, and it endears our Lord to me even more.

This is the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead, the third and final time according to John’s Gospel. I find it fascinating that our Risen Lord cooks his disciples a breakfast picnic on the beach as one of his three appearances following the resurrection. Breakfast, the most important meal of the day according to modern day nutritionists, cooked over a charcoal fire by Jesus. Jesus takes care of the practical needs of his disciples. Having first given them a suggestion on where to fish (the other side of the boat, guys!), and knowing that they must be hungry after a long night of fishing, Jesus says, “Come on, have some breakfast.” He feeds them with a morning beach party picnic. Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish. How cool is that?!

Then, after everyone has had their fill of bread and fish, after their bodies have been nourished by the Risen Christ, the scene shifts a bit and Jesus gets down to business. He speaks directly to Simon Peter. You remember Peter? The one who denied Jesus three times on the night before his arrest? Well here at the beach Jesus turns to him, not using the familiar “Peter” but the more formal, “Simon son of John,” and asks, “do you love me more than these?” And Jesus asks it not just the once, but three times: “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

The first time Peter responds, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” The second time, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” The second time Peter responds, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” The question is put a third time: “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” By now Peter is feeling hurt because Jesus asked the same question three times, as if Jesus didn’t believe his answer, so Peter replies, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” And what was Jesus’ responses to Peter? The first time, “Feed my lambs.” The second time, “Tend my sheep.” The third time, “Feed my sheep.” In a word, I think Jesus is saying to Simon Peter, and to his disciples, and to us: “If you love me, then show it. Live it. Share it. Don’t deny me with your words and your actions. Show that you love me by how you live your life.” We are to make a connection between our love for Jesus, our love for the Risen Lord, and our love and care for others. We are called to live out our love for Jesus by caring for the sheep of God’s pasture. You see what is happening? Jesus feeds the disciples, giving them charcoal grilled fish and bread for breakfast to fill their bellies, and then he sends them out. You’ve had your breakfast, now go out and take care of others. “Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.”

This morning, Jesus feeds us. It’s not breakfast on the beach, but it is the bread of life and the cup of salvation at the Lord’s Table. Here we are fed, not to fill our bellies but to fill our hearts; not to nourish our bodies but to nourish our souls. Each time we break bread together and share the cup of Christ, the Risen Lord is present with us, present to fill and to nourish. And then he sends us out, out into the world to live the resurrection life, to live an abundant life, to share life abundant, to live life in all of its fulness as we follow Jesus into the world. We gather here at this Table and then we march out that door to make a holy difference in the world. “Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep” Jesus said to Peter, to the one who had denied the Lord three times at the critical moment. And we, too, are sent out, fully aware that we too are not perfect, that our discipleship is sometimes wanting, but sent out to do the best we can as we care for the sheep of God’s pasture.

I remember those summertime meals of fried perch for breakfast. I also remember those occasions when the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper held more meaning for me than usual and I truly felt in the presence of the Lord. But I’m not being very faithful if I only remember those events. I can’t just take the bread and the cup this morning and remember the Lord Jesus, as if it were simply a nice story from times past. If Jesus is indeed the Risen Lord for us and for all, then we need to remember

that with his feeding of body and soul, he sends us out, inviting us to follow him into the ordinariness of our lives and to make an extra-ordinary difference in the world. This day, let us be fed that we might have the nourishment and the sustenance to follow him out into the world, that the world might have life, and have it abundantly. Come on disciples, let's go make a difference!

Amen.