

Enough is Enough

In our Gospel reading, it seems like Peter has had enough.

Jesus crucifixion at the hand of the Romans crushed the hopes and expectations of his followers that he might be the Messiah.

Peter and the others had barricaded themselves behind a lock door for awhile now. Peter decides that he was going fishing. I love trying to imagine the conversation and what it was exactly that pushed Peter to voice that he was moving away from the locked doors and that he was going fishing.

Did Peter just want to get out on the water and clear his mind?

Did Peter decide that it was time for him to get back to his livelihood. His bread and butter?

We are not entirely sure. But, what we do know is that there were six others who thought that this was a brilliant idea and they decided that they would go with them.

When our bible study group met and talked about the possibilities, they took a similar path and some of their answers included:

- What else would Peter do but get back out on the water
- It was his livelihood
- There was no leader giving them direction, so let's fish
- Maybe they were a little rusty ....

They did not catch a single fish. Now, remember, these are not just your typical weekend warriors. This use to be their profession. They were out on the water all night and they did not catch a single fish.

What a rough night.

At daybreak, someone is on the shore and realizes that they were unsuccessful. He suggests that they try the other side of the boat. They obliged. When they do this, they immediately catch so many fish that they cannot bring them into the boat.

When this occurs, there is a shift in the scene. The disciple whom Jesus loved recognizes that it is Jesus and points him out. Hey guys, "it is Jesus".

Now, Peter, at the time was naked. When he hears the words that it is Jesus, he puts on his clothes and jumps into the sea and swims to Jesus. The other disciples are now responsible for bring the boat and the nets in and they dragged the nets along the way.

Before I move on into the story, I want to highlight something that I believe is critical that can be easily overlooked. Each disciple or follower had a specific role not only in this story but in the story of the early church. Each and everyone of them had a distinctive role. The same is true for us. Each and everyone of us has a role to play. Now, within that role, each one is also called to follow Jesus and each one of us is called to follow him, as well.

In this story, someone bears witness to Jesus and the others hear and act upon the Good News. This happens all throughout the Bible. Story after story, we hear someone sharing and someone acting. In this story, the disciple who Jesus loves proclaims and Peter jumps into the lake and swims to the shore. He responds to the witness that he hears.

Now, let's take the next step. When they arrive on the beach, Jesus has a charcoal fire burning and, on that fire, there is fish on it and Jesus also has some bread. Jesus asks them to bring some of the fish that they caught over. Peter went on board and helped bring the haul in, 153 fishes.

There are many individuals who have tried to figure out the meaning of 153 fishes. There are some crazy theories out there. While it might be fun to speculate or try to make a connection, I like a simpler approach.

The men in the boat have been fishing a long time, so catching and counting fish became routine for them. They had to know what they had when they went to the market.

Now, in this story, 153 fish are quite a catch. We attempted to show it through the fishes in the sanctuary and on the windows. I think that we can rest in the fact that once again, this is a story that emphasizes the abundance of Jesus provision. Jesus, once again provides abundantly. In spite of the large catch, the nets do not break and there is nothing that is lost.

Over the next six weeks, you are going to hear temple talks and receive letters and hear conversations about the financial situation at Bay View Lutheran. On a surface level, it could look like we are living out of scarcity. However, I want us to change the narrative and I want us to look at the abundance. There is much abundance that is occurring at Bay View. The abundance is in all areas: time, talent and treasures. So, the stories that you will be seeing and hearing, will be individuals sharing about the great things that are occurring through our ministries.

The Tuesday morning bible study shared about abundance. They were celebrating how many great things are occurring here. They specifically note this in regards to us feeding and tending the sheep. Speaking of sheep, we will be diving into that a little more next week and maybe you will have the opportunity to spot a few sheep over the fishes this week.

I wonder if the seven disciples who were around the fire having fish and bread for breakfast were having flashbacks to when Jesus did another miracle, the feeding of the 5,000 with, yes, fish and bread.

Then, in the story, it seems like everyone fades into the background except Jesus and Peter. Jesus had taught the disciples to lay down one's life for a friend was the greatest sign of love. Peter had failed miserably. The risen Jesus forces Peter to confront his past. Jesus engages with Peter in what has to be a difficult conversation. He asks him three questions.

Now, Peter has been around a charcoal fire before and at that fire, he was also asked three questions. His mind had to be racing. His reputation was in shambles. When we boil the conversation down, it can be summarized as the following: "to keep Jesus' command to take care of his sheep is to love Jesus. At the end of the conversation, Peter is the one who is entrusted with the role of shepherding the flock. Jesus did not leave him in the past. Instead, he invites him to put his faith into action.

Peter had to remember that the sheep were still Jesus flock but Peter was commissioned to shepherd the flock. In the commissioning, the last words that Jesus speaks to Peter is Follow Me. We need to be like Peter and follow Jesus. When we follow Jesus, we will love him and keep his commandments.

I believe that Amy Pauw is absolutely right when she says, "Peter's story encourages us to trust that Jesus continues to meet us at his Table." At the table, is where he feeds us. He feeds us just like he fed the disciples. He continues to meet us on the road as we tend to the most vulnerable sheep.

This story echoes so much of one of our Lutheran baptismal promises. We promise that we will come and hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper. It is definitely a mystery. Christ's presence is never wholly predictable and it is definitely never under our control. Yet, in Scripture, at the Table, we meet him.

**AMEN**