

John 21:1-14
Third Sunday of Easter - Confirmation
May 1, 2022

It is a long distance from the Sea of Galilee to Whitewater, Wisconsin and the span of time is equally great, so there might seem to be little connection between the Gospel for this day with its fishing expedition and the confirmation of three teens. Yet I submit there is a message for us to gain from and that is

KEEP YOUR FAITH IN THE LIVING LORD

- I. Whose wisdom is perfect
- II. Whose power is unlimited
- III. Whose victory is yours

Throughout life we pray that you will keep your faith in the living Lord. His wisdom is perfect, as he showed in this encounter with the disciples. We are in the early weeks after Easter and the disciples awaited further training from the Lord Jesus. Some of them decided to head back north as they were to meet the Savior in Galilee. Several had been fishermen. Peter was not someone to sit around idly. He suggested going fishing and was joined by several others. Seven are either named or referred to here.

They headed out and did what the commercial fishermen did, fishing all night. Results of their labor: zilch. "They caught nothing." That's when Jesus appeared to them. It was early morning and the disciples didn't recognize him. Perhaps it was because of the distance or maybe he had changed his form. He told them to try the right side of the boat and results were immediately present. Was it a lucky guess? I doubt it. Surely they had tried that side before. Jesus knew their need and met that need.

As you go through life you will meet situations where you will not achieve success or not know what to do. There will be challenges to your faith. The devil won't stop tempting you just because you are confirmed. If anything, he will increase his efforts to draw you away from your Lord. But Jesus will be there also, at your side as your constant companion. You know that you need him. In your vows you ask God to help you. Also go to him for advice. You can't google each problem or temptation and have an answer pop up. Go to his Word. You're not finished with your study and won't be on this earth. The Bible is not a how-to book but it will guide you in godly paths. Use and apply its wisdom to life choices and decisions. Some routes are sinful and you see that you must avoid them. That narrows the options. There may still be multiple paths that are permissible. Put God first and follow the good. You will be blessed. It is a relief to know that you are not on your own. Live each day in faith.

II.

Something else is needed for follow through and we see it in the text. Keep your faith in the living Lord whose power is unlimited. Our Savior showed it in the catch of fish that resulted. There suddenly was an abundance in the nets of these formerly frustrated fishermen. God is not stingy when he blesses. In fact, the catch was too much to handle. They couldn't get them all in the boat and had to drag the net along. It amazed them that it didn't break. Once they had it on shore they counted the fish. John even remembered the number: 153, and the size, that they

were large. It was a miracle of the Lord's unlimited power. No questions remained as to the identity of their benefactor.

Another blessing awaited: breakfast was ready. "When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread." Jesus invited them to the meal and offered that they could add some of what they had caught. Had he bought and prepared the meal? Possibly, as natural means are the most common way he supplies our daily needs. Or had he put the food there as another miracle? That's also possible. Either way, it was welcome and met a need. The men had labored through the night and would have been hungry by then.

God's power in our behalf is good to know. Life is full of challenges that we are unable to meet on our own. Even our daily tasks depend on God's blessing. You are not yet heading out on your own, although it won't be all that many years before it happens. (They grow up fast, don't they?) Others here have completed your work years and rest in retirement. You still have daily needs. Regardless of your place in life, at school or work or just existing, you can't do it on your own. Go to God in prayer for strength and guidance.

Miracles are not promised—God can still do them and at times what seems impossible happens—but he does pledge to "uphold you with his righteous right hand." How powerful is that? You might remember the term "omnipotent," meaning all-powerful. There is nothing he can't do. Apply that assurance to your daily needs and you know you are secure.

Others here can relate how they got through times when they didn't know how it could happen. It might have been making ends meet in tough times or keeping going when they were exhausted physically and emotionally. They were at their wit's end. Talk to each other; listen to these veterans in the faith and receive encouragement from their life experiences. Turn your needs over to the Lord. He will help you. Have an active prayer life. He hears and answers our petitions and blesses us. Be bold in your prayer life since he can do anything. Take it to the Lord in prayer and then leave it in his hands, not anxious or worried. His power is unlimited.

III.

As you keep your faith in the living Lord, most important is the fact that he is the one whose victory is yours. It's not stated directly but reflected in the last verse of the text. "This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead." It's post-Easter. As we heard last Sunday, he had appeared to them on the evening of the resurrection, miraculously popping in to the locked room and demonstrating that he was alive and well. Then he came to them again a week later with Thomas present and met what was needed to affirm the faith of that hesitant disciple. Now he was with them again.

The significance of stating he was raised is that he had been dead. It happened because of our sins. We reviewed the situation during Lent and on Good Friday. We faced an impossible predicament. We were lost in sin, born in it. We call that original sin, which we inherited from our parents and they from theirs. We continue sinning each day of our lives. It's not over once you are confirmed. Temptations will bombard you even when you are old and gray (or bald). You will succumb to many of them. Guilt will pile up. And you know the penalty: "The wages of sin is death," ultimately eternal suffering in hell.

But you didn't just learn about sin in your study of the catechism. You learned that God loves you and sent Jesus to our world on a mission to rescue us from sin and its consequences. His love took action as he shouldered our guilt and paid the penalty for it by suffering horribly at the hands of men and of God, who forsook him during those hours he hung on the cross. Jesus died for you. You are forgiven.

He also rose, as the verse mentioned. He conquered death, and did it for us. He defeated the devil and broke his power, also for us. He supplies to us the ammunition to defeat Satan also. It's his Word. We will follow Jesus in rising. Eternal life is ours. Heaven brings the ultimate conquest over sin, death and Satan, for they will trouble us no more, not by our doing but as his gift to us.

That's why we are here today. We have a living Savior. If we did not, we would have no reason to gather. You three have come to confess your faith publicly and vow your loyalty to the Lord. You promise to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from him. You wouldn't do that for a failure. The text shows he is alive and well and still blessing his people. He invites you to trust him and we pray for you and for all of us, that he would keep us in faith in the one whose wisdom, power and most of all, whose victory is ours.

Live and follow your Lord confidently as you stand before his altar today and as you walk faithfully with your Savior every day. God bless you and all of us.