

14 April 2013

SGL

John 21:1-14

CCNS

### Spectacular Catch

One of our Sunday School teachers was observing her classroom of children while they drew. As she walked around to look at each one's artwork, she saw one little girl working diligently.

She asked her what the drawing was. "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the little girl replied, "They will in a minute."

No one knows what God looks like. That much is true. What is more important is that we can recognize are the effects of God's presence in our lives. Someone has experienced an unexplained healing. We have felt a sense of peace in the midst of chaos. Looking back we realize, "God was there!" Even prayer that has not been answered to our liking can mean God is trying to get our attention in another way.

Isn't that what happened to the disciples that day? Jesus came and cut through their haze of grief. After all they had been through - terrible ordeals, emotional highs and grief-stricken lows. The world as they knew it had all come apart. And what do we do when our world crashes around us? We stick to what we know. Grab onto whatever is normal. That is exactly what the disciples were doing. – getting on with their lives.

"I'm going fishing," Peter said. Back to what he knew. And some of the others went with him. The smell of water, the feel of the nets, the sun beating down on their backs – all of it a strenuous but comforting routine.

But that's the problem with routines. They get interrupted at best, and completely off track at worst. Jesus' appearance literally blew theirs right out of the water. "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No."<sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

That's exactly what they did. They netted so much fish that their boat almost sank. In the middle of the splashing and hauling, one dear disciple knew only one person could be responsible for such a spectacular catch. "it is the Lord."

Later, drying off around the cooking fire, Jesus broke bread and gave it to them, along with some broiled fresh fish. It was the breaking of the bread – a familiar routine – that opened their eyes. Inexplicably, Jesus was with them. Maybe it was to remind them of all Jesus sent them to do. Maybe he came to comfort, or prove once again that with God, all things are possible. It just may be that Jesus came to give them yet another chance.

*Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs."<sup>16</sup> A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."<sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*

Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crow at dawn. Three times Peter confesses his love for Jesus and in return is told what to do next. Follow in the steps of the Good Shepherd. Go back to the mission of Christ...but they can never go back, only forward. For the situation is different now. Their time with Jesus at their side prepared them for what comes next. Now they must forge ahead without Jesus at their side. But wait. That is not wholly true. We now realize there is a greater reason for Jesus to have come to them in such a familiar place. Jesus came back to remind them, "I am with you always, even until the end of the age."

The disciples believed and carried on Jesus' mission. Christians who brought the faith to this land, to this little town, did no less. Even now, our own lives, our own stories can be seen running parallel to the disciples. We may not be the church that once worshiped in a little wooden meetinghouse, but we carry on the spirit of Christ's mission. Our life situation is different now. Jesus still sends us to carry on the work of the Good Shepherd. "Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep." A fitting description for a farming community – but we continually have to ask ourselves, "Who are the sheep? What are the needs of the community?" Maybe more importantly we have to ask ourselves, "Who are we now? What is God's purpose for us?"

We need to take those questions seriously...and you will hear them again...and we will need to wrestle with the answers. For when we uncover the purpose God has for us as individuals and as church, people will begin to know what God looks like. Christ will be recognized in what we do. Let's cast our nets like the disciples, cast our vision out to see what is out there. We never know when we will come up with a spectacular catch.