

For the Journey

April 10/25 - Rev. Dave Crawford



“After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’

So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. - John 21:1-14.

An old colleague of mine once announced at a clergy gathering, "I don't do Lent, and I don't encourage it in my congregation. For the members of my church life is tough enough. I'm not going to put them through 6 weeks of all that Lent doom and gloom." His point was a good one, to an extent, and many churches, denominations, don't observe Lent at all, for the same or similar reasons.

Yet there's always an undercurrent to Lent which has to do with the very opposite of doom and gloom, a silver lining, a celebratory plot twist we know is coming, a grand conclusion. Every Sunday is a "Little Easter", one seminary professor used to say, and that includes Sundays in Lent. Indeed, if the Christian religion culminated in the story of a righteous man unjustly crucified, like thousands upon thousands of others in the ancient Near East, would that religion have survived millennia? Righteous men and women have been eliminated by their oppressors for centuries, and it still happens today. Would there be anything special about the name Jesus if it all ended with the Cross? Would the movement/religion still be alive today, newly vibrant in various parts of the world, as is happening in our time but rarely, if ever, reported in mainstream media? A persecuted Christian church is burgeoning in Iran, in China, in parts of Africa and East Asia. Even in Scandinavia in recent years Roman Catholicism has seen surprising growth, particularly among younger generations. The reason? Beyond the profound counter-cultural teachings of Jesus, and the vision Christianity offers of relationships and global relations built around compassion, forgiveness, grace, and love, there is at its core Easter!

When Jesus makes his post-resurrection drop-in visits with his inner circle, the purpose seems to be that of encouragement to those who may have thought everything ended with crucifixion and that the movement had failed. Whether it's the "Road to Emmaus" story (Luke 24:13-35), the "Doubting Thomas" story (John 20:19-31), or the "Fish Grilling" story of John 21, the message is always the same: "Don't be afraid, there's more to life and the universe than meets the eye, have peace, I am alive as you can see, and new life is yours too, by the grace and love of the Father. Oh, and one last thing - be my hands and feet in the world. Love my people."

Every Sunday a Little Easter. Yes! Thanks be to God!