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Easter 4 Yr. C
April 29, 2007
(Easter 3 Lectons)
Rev. 5: 11- 14
John 21: 1 - 19

“Hungry”

A man and his wife were driving their recreational vehicle across the country and were nearing a town spelled K i s s i m e e. They noted the strange spelling and tried to figure how to pronounce it — KISS-a-me; kis-A-me; kis-a-ME.

They grew more perplexed as they drove into town. Since they were hungry, they pulled into a place to get something to eat. At the counter, the man said to the waitress:

“My wife and I can’t seem to be able to figure out how to pronounce this place. Will you tell me where we are and say it very slowly so that I can understand.”

The waitress looked at him and said: “Buuurrgerrr Kiiiiinnng.”

Even when we’ve arrived, we aren’t exactly sure where we are!

This is where Peter and the other six disciples are in our gospel story for this morning.

The story says there are seven altogether. Seven that wonderful perfect number signifying God’s jubilee of grace and abundance—the wholeness of God’s Shalom, here representing the fullness of the believing community.

Yes, as believers we’ve all arrived here after Easter but we still aren’t sure where we are or what’s supposed to happen next. We’ve heard all the resurrection appearance stories:

How the Risen Christ has appeared to Mary Magdalene on Easter morn, to the Cleopas and the other disciple on the Emmaus Road; to the disciples minus Thomas in the upper room and later to the disciples plus Thomas. And now here he is again on the beach, stirring the embers of an aromatic breakfast fire of bread and fish. Bread and fish.

Lots of echoes in this story. What echoes do you hear? Bread and fish—what does that bring to mind? (*The feeding of the five thousand.*) And the charcoal fire? (*The charcoal fire in the courtyard of the high priest when Jesus is arrested.*)

And what does Peter do that night that is the echo of Jesus’ three questions to Peter in this story, “Do you love me?” (*Peter denies Jesus three times.*)

And each time Peter says, “Yes Lord, you know I love you,” Jesus tells Peter to what? “Feed my sheep. And what is the echo we hear in this reference to sheep? Who is Jesus? (*The Good Shepherd.*)

And every time he appears following his resurrection someone declares what? (*It is the Lord*)—which is what the Disciple Jesus Loved says to Peter after they follow Jesus’ advice and find their nets so full of fish they can barely haul them in.

So full of fish—do you remember that other story about the call of Peter? How Peter and the sons of Zebedee had fished all night and they had caught nothing until Jesus came along and told them to put out into deeper waters and let their nets down yet again?

Many echoes.¹ You may find more. Moments of “Aha!” Just as these disciples felt as the identity of the stranger on the shore is revealed to them. Revealed to them how? With Jesus abiding presence, with his guidance, with his love, with his meal of himself, with his forgiveness and finally with his command, “Follow me.”

Each echo – each “aha!” filling us up with his presence. Each “aha!” surprising us with his reality.

We find ourselves asking each time, “How did you know Lord?” How did you know how empty we are? How hungry we are? How much

¹ This idea of the echo taken from Process commentary on John 21 for 3rd Sunday in Easter

we need you? And how much the world needs you?

Hunger. There is a hunger in the human soul for God. A hunger that can't be satiated by simply standing on the beach or wadding around in the shallows. A hunger that gnaws at us to go out into the deeper waters. But we are afraid. We don't know what's in the water. Maybe we can't swim. The shore line is safe. So we stay with the shore we know, with the people we know already. The wave action is entertaining. We'll come again another Sunday—maybe then we'll be ready to go out into the deeper waters, to risk sharing the gospel with others, to risk ourselves in the service of others whom we don't know, who aren't like us, who we don't understand.

Peter and the disciples are sitting here on the shore. They've seen Jesus but they still don't really know what that means or what they are supposed to do. Peter decides "I'm going fishing." The others say okay and go along.

Hear that echo? What echo do you hear? (*Jesus told them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.'*) With the resurrection the story has come full circle back to where Peter first met Jesus when he was a fisherman. And that's exactly where you and I are this morning. Back at the beginning.

Peter to his credit is trying to follow Jesus. But there's something missing. What's missing? Jesus. Peter's trying to do it without him. The result?

No catch. No fish. People, we can't do this on our own people. Discipleship isn't about going out there and using all the latest methods or offering the latest programs, worship styles, music, or having the spiffiest facility.

All of these are things, as important as they are, without Jesus are empty with nothing to offer because we without him we are fishing in the shallows with nothing to offer anyone.

The world is hungry. Literally and figuratively. Do you remember how in the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand Phillip goes to Jesus and says, Lord, send the people away so

they can buy something to eat, as this is a lonely place, far away. Jesus says to Phillip, "YOU give them something to eat!"

But they can't. But Jesus can. He gives them bread and fish overflowing in abundance. He gives them himself. And he gives us himself. And that is enough.

His presence is enough to overcome our fear of deep water. His presence is all we need to move us beyond receiving his forgiveness and his love to ACTION. When Jesus questions Peter three times, "Do you love me more than these?" and follows Peter's affirmation three times with, "Feed my sheep," he isn't simply restoring his relationship with Peter; he is moving him to a new place.

Discipleship is about action. Discipleship is the love, the justice and the truth of God expressed through us in the world in real people's lives.

A Pontius' Puddle cartoon begins with: "I wonder if God can really hear me." The next frame shows Pontius praying: Hey, God! What should I do with my life? The third frame has a voice from heaven saying, FEED THE HUNGRY. RIGHT INJUSTICE. WORK FOR PEACE!

Just testing! Pontius replies.

According to philosopher Richard Rorty: "The accumulation of spiritual peak experiences can become like a greedy person's accumulation of money. The more you get, the more you hunger for more ... But maybe what the soul hungers for is ultimately not a variety of interesting and moving insights but a single universal truth," a single universal truth like, "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."□□

Which in turn helps us realize the truth about giving and receiving in his name: when I feed others I feed my own soul because in feasting on him he takes me into himself.

Same here, God speaks back.

Mother Teresa said: "In each of our lives Jesus comes as the bread of life — to be eaten, to be consumed by us. This is how he loves us.

Then Jesus comes into our human life as the hungry one, the other, hoping to be fed with the bread of our life — our hearts loving, our hands serving.”²

Jesus is telling us today in his command to feed my sheep that his resurrection is about changing the world. Really changing it. It's not enough to simply give handouts. We, like Peter, need to be moved to a new place of understanding about what our action as disciples means.

Brazilian Bishop Dom Helder Camara demonstrates this well in his remark, “When I ask people for bread to feed the poor, they think I am a saint; when I ask them why the poor are hungry, they think I am a communist.”

Hungry for bread and fish.

Can't you smell it? Have you ever been camping on the beach and watched in the chill of the morning as the sun begins to peek through the overcast? With the aroma of coffee, clam chowder and bacon and eggs cooking over the fire? And suddenly you realize how famished you are! And how good breakfast sounds? How eager you are to fill up and be about the goodness of what the day brings?

Discipleship is about being famished for filling up on Jesus—it's about our passion, our undivided commitment to him as the shaper and guide of our *own* lives and of our community life. It's about living for him so we can live fully as ourselves and fully for others.

Jesus' calls us to breakfast. Are you hungry?

² Homiletics Illustrations.