

+ IN THE NAME OF JESUS +

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
The Third Sunday of Easter**

May 4, 2025

“THE RESURRECTION DIFFERENCE”

John 21:1-19

“This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead,” and two things strike me about this third manifestation.

First, I am intrigued and baffled that these disciples both know that this is the Lord and also do not recognize him. *“None of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord.”* If they knew, why not? It’s another of several indications in the Gospels that our Lord’s glorified body was significantly different in appearance – as someday ours shall be, by his grace. Clearly, Jesus appeared in a way they had not seen him before.

Secondly, I am struck by the *“oddness”* of our text. Sure, the catch of 153 large fish is no extraordinary occurrence, and no manifestation of the risen One is ever odd. But our text seems anticlimactic. No breaking through, *“He is not here. He is risen.”* They knew that already. The disciples are not huddled in a locked room, afraid for their safety *“for fear for of the Jews.”* They are safely home in Galilee. We hear no great commission to *“make disciples of all nations,”* and no memorable prayer such as, *“Lo, I am with you always to the very end of the age.”*

Instead, we are shown a cluster of disciples who, without their Lord, are fearful, anxious and unproductive; but with him, all that changes – not in a way that lifts them above of ordinary life, but rather equips them for it. And the risen One is here to do the same for us. **WHILE WE BASK IN**

THE GLORY OF OUR LORD’S RESURRECTION, WE ALSO FIND COMFORT AND PURPOSE IN HIS STEADFAST, UNRECOGNIZED PRESENCE IN OUR ORDINARY LIVES. It is . . .

“THE RESURRECTION DIFFERENCE”

I. APART FROM THE RISEN LORD

A. For the “seven”

Apart from their risen Lord, the disciples were fearful. *“The twelve”* were now *“the eleven,”* and even some of them were not present. It was just a handful of them. And they seem so aimless. In my mind’s eye, I imagine Peter pacing the floor till he can’t take it anymore and blurts out, *“I’m going fishing!”* And the others say, *“We’re coming too! (Anything to get out of this house!)”* But their labors are completely unproductive. These are professional fishermen, but they labor all night and catch nothing. So when they hear Jesus (whom they do not recognize) call out to them, *“You haven’t caught anything, have you?”*, their answer is a grumpy *“No! (Now, go away!)”*

B. For us

Fragmented; aimless; unproductive. That’s how their life seems to be apart from the risen Christ, and this goes for us as well. As for fear, we easily allow life in Christ’s Church to devolve into an *“every man for himself”* exercise – quite the opposite of his *“new commandment . . . that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (Jn 13:34)*. We likewise give in to a certain anxiety which we may not recognize because the rut we are in makes it feel like we are on a treadmill. Our labors often seem unproductive and fruitless, and even when we do find success, we know that it is destined to run into a brick wall called *“the end of the world.”*

II. WITH THE RISEN CHRIST

I am grateful, then, that God’s Holy Spirit used the Apostle John to give us this brief, everyday account of “ordinary” life after the resurrection, for it

reassures us that, while life without our risen Lord certainly can seem fragmented, aimless and unproductive, life without our risen Lord is a of the . We may not his presence, but he is with us all the same, and we, who were fragmented, aimless and unproductive are now , in , and with his own purpose.

A. For the "seven"

Fragmented disciples become disciples. When he miraculously replaces their night of fruitless toil with this great catch of fish, they are immediately to him. Not his voice or his appearance, but this reveals to John, *"It is the Lord!"* That sent Peter throwing himself into the water to swim to shore. The rest head there in the boat, with them the net full of fish. But, what they are doing to the net full of fish, Jesus is doing to them. (This is the same word that Jesus uses in John 6:44, *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me him"*, and in John 12:32, *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will all people to myself."*)

The disciples had been aimless, but now they are the in . *"Come and break your fast,"* he tells them. They seem to hesitate, so he comes to them, handing them the bread and fish he has prepared, expressing his desire to with them and provide for their yet-to-be-r bodies.

Their own labors had been unproductive. Now, he is them to do his . But they will not be forced to rely on th or their . He will provide. Could they see this great catch of fish and not recall his former words, *"I will make you of men" (Mt 4:19)?* For six of them, this is only implied here; but for a certain Simon, son of John, it is very explicit. *"Do you love me more than these?"*, Jesus asked him. Just a few days earlier, that had been

Peter's b . We know how that turned out! Yet, graciously and repeatedly, the Lord ab each of Peter's denials with his gracious c : *"Feed my lambs; tend my sheep; feed my sheep."* And do so, Peter, not relying on your own p or re , but on my infinite g .

B. For us

The same holds true for us. Without the risen One, we would be d for fragmented, aimless, unproductive lives. The thing is, we are never w the risen Lord. We may not re his presence, but he is with us all the same, gathering us to himself by his gracious, powerful , inviting us to f with him, and sending us out to cast our n as, through his Church, he continues his saving work.

Conclusion: We may not always re the Lord's presence with us; and we will often find ourselves str perhaps with the "ordinariness" of life on this side of our own resurrection which his resurrection has won for us. But the risen Lord is with us all the same, g , in , and s . That gracious presence of the resurrected One makes all the difference.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. In what ways might your life seem fragmented, aimless, and/or unproductive?
2. How does your risen Lord's unseen but promised presence serve to gather, invite, and send you?