

## **Worshipping God Together**

### **Call to worship**

Minister: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures,

**All: He leads me beside quiet waters,  
He refreshes my soul.**

**MP 660:1,2,5      The Lord's my shepherd**

### **Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray:

God of the miraculous and the mundane,  
open our eyes to see the goodness in others and ourselves.

Forgive us Lord,  
when our eyes are closed to the needs of others,  
when our hearts are closed to you.

Give us your hand and help us up,  
that we may be renewed in grace and humility  
and enabled to share your love with a wounded world.

Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Give us the willingness to be available  
to the community in which we live,  
that quietly and confidently we might live as those  
who know they are part of the Easter story  
that does not end in Jerusalem,  
but goes out into all the world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

**ALL:** Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And  
forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for  
ever. Amen.

## **Reflecting on God's Word**

Reading: John 21:1-14 (NT page 1090)

Reader: Irene Nichol

### **Background to the reading**

Many researchers have come to the conclusion that our reading is part of an epilogue of the Gospel of John. It is universally accepted that the Gospel story was brilliantly concluded with the gripping story of Thomas and the classic summation in 20:30–31. Some researchers also have the view that the epilogue was written after the Gospel was completed, basically by the same hand and that he was supported or assisted in this effort by others in his faith community.

But what was the reason for this Epilogue? It seems clear that some matters were left unsaid that really had to be treated like the importance of Peter. Chapter 21 thus supplies such a restoration of Peter.

Another reason for the need of this chapter was to explain to the community that in spite of their having the witness of the beloved disciple, he would not forever be present to lead them. So in order to make clear to the community that he would not be around indefinitely as their resource, other disciples are needed to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ too. But most researchers agree, there is no textual evidence that the Gospel ever circulated without Chapter 21.

So let us look at our reading:

The place of Jesus' appearance is at the Sea of Tiberias, the Roman designation for the Sea of Galilee, a place also called the Sea of Genessaret according to Luke 5:1 and the Sea of Chinnereth in Numbers 34:11, from the Hebrew *kinnerot/kinneret* meaning "harp."

Although Jesus undoubtedly provided the disciples with a number of resurrection appearances, our reading is the only appearance beside the Sea in Galilee. It seems as if there were two traditions in the early church namely that Jesus either

appeared in Jerusalem or in Galilee. John uses both traditions namely in chapter 20 Jesus appeared in Jerusalem and in chapter 21 next to the Sea of Galilee.

In verse 2 seven disciples are mentioned. This is a representative number like twelve, which here represents a full or complete chosen group. It is remarkable that the beloved disciple is not mentioned by name which implies that the evangelist was trying to hide the identity of the beloved disciple - the one whom Jesus loved rather than assuming that everyone knew him.

Peter's announcement that he was going fishing and the other six agreeing to accompany him. Despite their best efforts during the night, they caught nothing. Fishing was often done at night. Some people have reported that fish are more easily caught at night than in the day on the Sea of Tiberias; they could then be sold in the morning.

Nets were probably made of rope woven from substances like flax - it is thought that nets had a narrow end pulled by the men in the boat and a wider end sunk by attached weights.

At daybreak Jesus waited for them on the beach but just as in the cases of Mary Magdalene and the two travelers to Emmaus they did not recognise him, despite the fact that He appeared to them twice before.

Then Jesus addressed them as: "*Paidia*", "children" and not friends as it is translated in the NIV. This term, *paidia*, can at times be an expression of intimacy as between a parent and children or a rabbi and his disciples. Jesus confirmed something He already knew.

So He instructed them to throw their net on the right side of the boat. And then the miracle happens. They caught so much fish that they were unable to pull the net up. They had to actually drag the net to shore. And when they did reach the shore, there were 153 fishes. The risen Lord has provided them more fish than they could possibly eat by themselves. The number 153 just emphasizes the greatness of the miracle and just to add to it: our reading declares that the net was not even torn!

And during this miracle, the beloved disciple says to Peter that it is the resurrected Lord. So Peter acted and swam towards Jesus.

Jesus awaits them with breakfast on the beach. According to Jewish custom they had two meals per day: breakfast, usually before any work started on a regular day and the main dinner at night. Jesus' breakfast meal of bread and fish reminds us of the feeding of the 5000 previously.

John closes our reading by stressing the fact that it was now the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was resurrected. The number three symbolized the completeness of the witness.

So what is the message of John?

Jesus was telling them to fish differently, to change their current position in order to catch fish. He appeared to them for the third time, reiterating His coming to the earth – to feed the hungry, to care for those who are alone and heartbroken like the disciples.

Amen

**MP 628**

**Tell me the old, old story**

**Sermon**

Jesus said to the disciples that they must throw their net on the right side of the boat, meaning that they must fish differently in order to catch fish.

Maybe that is exactly what we need to do in order to be fishers of men, maybe we too must change tactics and think again on how reach out to people in our communities?

This week on Wednesday evening I went to Edinburgh to listen to the famous preacher, cum producer cum theologian Rob Bell talking about his new book "What we talk about when we talk about God".

Someone in the audience asked him afterward how he, Rob Bell sees the “ future of the church”. The man who asked the question called the church a “semi sinking ship”. Rob Bell answered that the church will always exist where God meets His children wherever they are. He will meet them in the celebration of the bread and the wine. He will meet them in their human vulnerability and frailty as the God of miracles.

Our reading reaffirms his views. Jesus met his 7 disciples as the resurrected Lord on the beach with bread and fish. During the meal they became convinced that the Risen Lord is their host. He knew they did not catch any fish at all and told them to fish differently from how they previously did.

How can we fish differently?

Maybe we must realise our own vulnerability and instead of focussing on all the issues that so often divides us as followers of Jesus, we must reconfirm our united belief in the resurrected Lord Jesus

Maybe we as the church must love and forgive more, instead of making our churches police stations where we control the movements of people, ticking boxes when they attend church and other activities.

Maybe we as the church must live out the peace and pardon we received from God, instead of making our churches fire stations where all we do on a daily basis are to put fires out between people.

Maybe we as the church must be much more inclusive instead of making our churches beautiful hotels where just those who can afford it or is in the right social class that can attend or in other words those who have more faith than others are welcome and those who has the right skin colour or sexual orientation.

No we as the church must meet the people where they are and tell them about Jesus Christ, about His life of love and the hope He left us all. We must meet them at the Lord’s table not as Holy people but people who are frail, vulnerable and dependent on the grace of God. We must meet them in the hospitals, caring for them. We must meet them at their houses, where they struggle with broken relationships , abuse hardship, grief and mental suffering. We must meet them at funerals where they are heavy-laden with grief and sorrow. We must meet them when they are getting married and full of joy – telling them of God who brought them together. We must meet them when they baptise their children and

grandchildren – telling them that God loves all His children. We must meet each other here and convince one another of the forgiving grace of God, comforting one another and helping each other when the going gets tough.

We must meet them where they are – whether it is in the church, or outside the church, whether it is in the backstreets of our society or in the front seats of power. We must show them the love that Jesus Christ has for us. We must show them the hope that we carry with us that there is another life made possible by God, a kingdom that has no walls, where peace and love reigns forever. We must show them our faith when the going gets tough, when we lose everything that is dear to us on this earth. We must show them our compassion and care, always forgiving and always sacrificing!

Jesus is telling us – if we want to catch more fish, we need to seriously change our ways of how we worship, how we reach out and how we witness to the world.

May we always ask Him what to do and may we remain prayerfully dependent on Him for guidance and help as we move and journey through our world – reaching out to others, telling each other about the old old story of God's love! Amen

### **Responding to God's word**

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 631 "Tell out my soul"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Irene Nichol

**MP 760:1,4,5                      When we walk with the Lord**

### **Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:**

Go in the name of the Lord to your homes,  
your neighbours, your communities.

Go and make a difference.

Use your hands to raise up those who are disheartened.

Use your voices to tell others about the risen Christ.

Use your feet to visit those who are lonely,

and open your heart to receive  
from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

love and grace and power.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
Be with you all  
Now and for evermore  
**Sung Amen**