

Third Sunday of Easter - May 1, 2022, Year C  
**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 21:1-14

***“Miraculous Catch”***

The Apostles remembered the message from the angel in Mark 16:7 *“He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”* The angel spoke at the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. After they saw Jesus twice in the upper room, they headed out to the Galilee. They were obedient. This was a place where they were most comfortable since it was their home, and they waited. While they were there, they returned to what they knew best and found comfort in – fishing on the beautiful Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberius. Today's Gospel tells us there were *“Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee (Nathanael was also known as Bartholomew – Bar (son of) Tolome), the sons of Zebedee (John and James), and two other disciples.”* (John 21:2) As we have discussed many times in the past – fishermen did their work at night, since the fish were attracted to the light that they used.

So these apostles, after working all night long and coming up empty, are met by someone who is quite a distance away, on the shore of the Galilee, who calls them “children” and tells them to go back out and cast their net on the ‘right side’ of the boat. We are not told whether or not they remembered the first time that Jesus told them to go back out – but we do know that the results are very similar. But this time, Jesus is not in the boat but on the shore, and He is telling them to do it themselves – and to drop their nets off the right side of the boat. The Apostles were fishing off the northwestern shore near the place where Jesus preached His Sermon on the Mount, and near the site of the feeding of the 5,000. This place is called Tabgha – meaning Seven Springs, and it is very near the place where the fishermen were called to be Apostles, which was not far from Capernaum. (If you will look at the back of your bulletin - I have given you an arial photo with Tabgha clearly marked, as well as some of the very famous neighboring areas.) Tabgha is an area that the Apostles knew as close to home – and is significant in the life of the church. This northwestern and western shore of the Sea of Galilee were thought to be the “Jewish” waters and when you would go onto the lake to fish you would point the boat north – fishing off the left-hand side of the boat – the Jewish side of the boat. The eastern shore was the Gentile side of the boat, where the Golan Heights and the Decapolis was. It was and on that shore Jesus drove the “legion” of demons into the swine. Swine or pigs could not live near Jews and only have a place living in pagan Gentile lands. For Jesus to be telling the Apostles to throw their nets off the right side of the boat which was pointing north would be considered Gentile waters and the fish would be considered Gentile fish. Do you see the significance of the Risen Jesus directing the Apostles, preparing them for ministry, so that now, as fishers of men – they would catch the Gentiles into their nets as well? Not just the Jews! And they took in quite a haul of fish! By the direction of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God now was open to everyone, Jew, and Gentile!

When the Apostles headed for shore with their huge, miraculous, catch, it was then that Peter recognized Jesus – and jumped from the boat toward Him. The other Apostles brought the boat in and followed, arriving to find that Jesus had already prepared a fire and had cooked

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fish and bread. Fish and bread- the very same meal that fed 5,000 people right near there, was awaiting the followers of Jesus. Fish and bread; a meal provided by Jesus – without the help of the Apostles – that had to have come from the same heavenly source as that famous multiplied meal.

Jesus greeted the Apostles and asked them to *“Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.*” (John 21:10-11) This was a large number, much larger than all of them could eat and they were large fish. So why does the Apostle John use the number 153? I would say that this was an event that needed to be reported with detailed accuracy, and rather than saying 150 or 200 fish, instead he reported it as exactly 153 and it meant that his report was precisely as it happened, and the Jesus’ followers would need to hear the message associated with it.

Some Christians will at times get the impression that it is up to us to do it all. You know –

- if we don’t organize it, it won’t get done!
- If we don’t teach it – it won’t get taught!
- If we don’t tell people the Good News of Jesus Christ- they won’t hear it!
- If we don’t change the world – it won’t get changed.

Some people think that we need to be God’s hands. Well, I want to suggest to you that God doesn’t need our hands. Remember, it was God’s hands that made the sun rise this morning, and it was His hands that created the world with just a word. God doesn’t need our hands, but He gratefully accepts them, allowing us to come alongside Him in ministry.

God welcomes the efforts of those that He loves and honors and blesses those efforts, for they glorify Him. Jesus doesn’t need the Apostles’ fish, but as I mentioned He invites them to bring their catch alongside the ones that He has prepared. He asks them to work alongside Him. Listen to these words of the first time that Jesus told the apostles to throw out the nets: *“he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”* (Luke 5:4-8) This time their efforts brought in the catch that Jesus designed for them, and so it is in ministry – Jesus sends us out – to do the work He has given us to do (do those words sound familiar?) – that He has designed for us to do; things to do, people to come in contact with, and He blesses us and guides us all the while. I might add that they had to be thinking that so much of what was happening seemed so very familiar to them. Have you ever had that happen to you? You go someplace and you feel that you have been there before, or you meet someone and you say to yourself ‘I know them’ or I have met them – they seem so familiar. That must have been racing through their heads – they know they have been to this place before – they grew up

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near here. What happened here? Jesus fed 5,000. And what happened here - Jesus fed them with bread and fish. Amazing! God loves to do that, having something happen at the same place – several times. Throughout all of Scripture, God has an intricate way of weaving things so that we can relate to it.

Each one of us are called to work hard for Jesus. To be organized with no excuse for laziness, sloppiness, or halfhearted effort in God’s Kingdom. If it is God’s work that we are doing – then we must do it with all of our might – striving to do excellence in the process. Jesus calls each one of us into ministry in His Name. I cannot help but remember His words “*you did not choose Me, but I chose you.*” (John 15:16) We are called to come alongside Him, just like the Apostles that day. Jesus welcomes your efforts; He welcomes your ministry, as you are a part of the Body of Christ. He wants you to come alongside Him – fishing for people – a truly miraculous catch.

