

COME AND HAVE BREAKFAST

John 21:1-14

Key Verse: 21:12

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

In today's passage, the Risen Christ appears to his disciples and restores them from their failures. His disciples had abandoned him on the night he was arrested. But he still loved them the same. His love endures forever. Jesus stood on the beach of the Sea of Galilee very early in the morning. He prepared and served them a hearty breakfast. Let us think about what it means to have breakfast with the Risen Christ.

I. IT IS THE LORD! (1-8)

Look at verse 1. *"Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way..."* Jesus appeared to his disciples several times after his resurrection. This time he appeared to them by the Sea of Galilee. According to John, this was his third appearance to them (14). John begins the account with the word "afterward." What does he mean by "afterward"? In John 20, the Risen Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene and then to his disciples. Mary was crying at the empty tomb when Jesus stood beside her. The disciples were gathered in a room with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews when Jesus came to them. Their problem was that they did not connect the empty tomb with the resurrection of Jesus. They did not remember what Jesus had said to them—that he would die as the Lamb of God but rise again from the dead. The Risen Christ wiped away Mary's tears from her eyes. He gave peace to the fearful disciples. He also gave them a mission—to go and tell the good news of forgiveness. He said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (20:21). They were overjoyed when they saw the Risen Jesus. Now, however, they were back in Galilee. And things were not exactly the same as they had been.

The disciples were still in a state of shock and unbelief. Unthinkable things had happened to them. Judas Iscariot, one of their own, betrayed the Lord. All of them abandoned Jesus as he was arrested. Then the religious leaders condemned Jesus to death. He was executed by the Roman soldiers. After following Jesus for more than three years, the eleven disciples must have split, some of them going their own ways. In today's passage, only seven of them huddled together in Galilee, even though Jesus had told them to go and wait for him in Galilee. Their future looked as uncertain as ever.

Peter in particular was swimming in a deep sea of failures. From the beginning, Jesus loved him and paid close attention to him. Jesus even changed his name from Simon the Sand to Peter the Rock. Jesus prayed for him to be a rock-solid man of faith. But he had failed Jesus miserably. On the night Jesus was arrested he denied Jesus, not once or twice, but three times. Peter denied Jesus the third time, saying, "How many times do I have to tell you? I don't know the guy!" (Mt 26:69-75) Immediately a rooster

crowed. The rooster might have been saying to Peter: “Three strikes and you are out!” Peter betrayed the love of Jesus. He didn’t mean to do that. A sense of failure overwhelmed him and he wept bitterly. But Jesus did not say, “Three strikes and you are out!” Instead, the Risen Christ came to look for him. He visited him once again, this time by the Sea of Galilee.

Look at verse 2. Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John and two other disciples huddled in a dark apartment to have a pity party. The atmosphere was heavy. They were silent, except for the occasional sighs. After a few days, however, they had to face the cold reality—they had to find a way to survive. They had their rent payment coming due and bills to pay. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter finally told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing (3). Peter said “I am going out to fish.” I think this was a statement of resignation and despair. It’s like saying, “I am done with following Jesus. I gave everything to be a disciple of Jesus. But it’s over now.” And he thought that he could always go back to his old job and live his old life. But they caught nothing that night.

It was on the same shore of the Sea of Galilee. One morning three years earlier, Peter was washing his nets there. Though he had worked all night, he had caught nothing. He was tired and hungry. At that moment, Jesus came to him and said, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (Lk 5:4). Peter was an expert fisherman. He knew there were no fish in the shallow water. Amazingly he said, “Because you say so, I will let down the nets.” And amazingly, he caught such a large number of fish that the nets began to break. When Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Lk 5:8) Jesus said to him, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” It was a turning point of his life. Peter left everything and followed Jesus.

Why was Peter so ready to leave everything and follow Jesus? Before Jesus’ calling, Peter had no purpose or meaning in his life. He worked hard every night in the cold sea only to pay his bills. But his dream was born when Jesus helped him to catch a large number of fish that morning. He felt that he could become someone great with the help of Jesus. So he left everything to follow Jesus. And the past three years with Jesus was the best time of his life. Then Jesus was crucified. And with his death, Peter’s human dream was shattered. Moreover, he denied Jesus three times. He could not forgive himself. He was in deep despair. To add insult to injury, he caught nothing that night. Even the fish in the sea seemed to be saying to him, “You are a loser.” To Peter, his life appeared to be over.

But to the Risen Jesus, it was just a beginning. As he had promised, he came to Galilee and stood on the shore of the sea. But his disciples did not recognize him. Perhaps the visibility was low even though Jesus stood only 100 yards away. The Risen Christ looked different too; he was no longer a suffering servant. Or perhaps they weren’t expecting Jesus to be there early morning, even though he had told them to wait for him in Galilee. Most likely their minds were preoccupied with their own problems to

see Jesus who was standing there. This happens to us as well. When we are preoccupied with our problems, we often forget that Jesus is with us.

Look at verse 5. *He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.* Jesus was ready to help them to recover from their failure in fishing. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." It was not a proper time for fishing and the advice made little sense to the long-time fishermen, but they obeyed anyway. When they did, they caught a large number of fish. To Peter, it was *déjà vu* all over again.

For the second time, Jesus restored Peter's failure in fishing. In this competitive world, people tend to reward those who succeed and punish those who fail. Peter had failed both as a fisherman and as his disciple. But Jesus did not say, "You are not cut out to be my disciple. You are dismissed." Jesus wanted to restore him from his failures. Jesus wanted him to rise above his failures and start a new life.

There are many wise sayings about failures in life. C. S. Lewis said, "Failures are finger posts on the road to achievement." Abraham Lincoln said, "My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure." Bill Gates said, "It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure." These are wise sayings of great men. But our Lord Jesus can help us with more than wise sayings. Jesus does not just tell us wise things. He does not send us a text message saying things like, "Failure is the mother of success. Don't give up. Good luck to you." Instead, Jesus is intimately involved in our lives. He does not leave us alone to deal with our failures and pains. Jesus is with us as we go through trials in life. In the book of Daniel, there is a story about Daniel's three friends. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down before the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar, they were thrown into a blazing furnace. The furnace was so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took them there. But God protected them. The three were walking around in the fire unharmed. Not even a hair of their heads was singed. Most impressively, there was a fourth man walking with them in the fire. It was Jesus who came to rescue them. Jesus was with them in the midst of their trials. Likewise, Jesus is with us in good times as well as bad.

Jesus restores us from our failures. He helps us to overcome our failures. There is no real failure for us as long as we remain in Jesus. We can grow in faith through failures. Our Lord Jesus is ready to restore us. In Jesus, there is always a second chance for us.

Look at verse 7. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" John was the first one who put two and two together. He knew that there was only one person in the world who could tell the fish to come to the right side of their boat. He knew that it was Jesus. So he told Peter, "It is the Lord!" Suddenly Peter put on his jacket and jumped into the water. Normally you take off your jacket to go into water. Obviously Peter wanted to show his respect for Jesus. He wanted to greet Jesus in wet,

but proper attire.

II. BREAKFAST WITH THE RISEN CHRIST (9-14)

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread (9). *Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn* (10-11). What is the significance of the number 153? The author does not say. We can only speculate. Someone said it signifies the importance of the year 153 AD. But nothing significant happened in that year. Another said that 153 is the sum of numbers 1 through 17. That's interesting. But what does that mean? One plausible theory is that people in Jesus' time believed that there were 153 different species of fish in the sea. We know now there are more than that. But at least this is meaningful in that all different kinds of people of the world are caught in the nets of Jesus' disciples through their preaching.

Anyway, what did Jesus do for his disciples? Let us read verse 12 together. *Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.* Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." He took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with fish (13). Like a mother, Jesus served Peter and the other disciples with a delicious breakfast. As they were eating, none of them dared ask Jesus, "Who are you?" even though he looked so different from the suffering servant they used to see. They knew it was the Lord. Who else could have known that they would return empty-handed from their all night fishing? Who else could have known that they were swimming in the sea of despair and needed someone to help them? Most of all, who else would care about a bunch of losers so much to prepare a delicious meal for them? They knew it was Jesus whose love for them was unending.

The disciples were fully satisfied. All their frustrations melted away as they enjoyed the breakfast fellowship with Jesus on the beach. As the bright morning sun rose, a hope in God was rising in their hearts.

The Risen Christ ate with his disciples. He was not a ghost. Jesus taught them to have resurrection faith in the way they could understand by eating with them. Eating fellowship with Jesus was always the happiest time for them. The Risen Christ says to us also, "Come and have breakfast." Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. When we have good breakfast to start the day, we have the energy to work hard all day. Spiritually speaking, to begin each day with breakfast with Jesus is important to us. Early morning prayer and daily bread can help us to have victory in our daily life. "Come and have breakfast"—Let us hear the voice of Jesus!

I heard that the movie, "God is not dead" (2014), is pretty good. In it, a college student Josh finds his faith challenged by a philosophy professor. This teacher tells his students to write down, "God is dead." Many professors would like to do this in their

class. They hate God for no reason. But to us believers, our God is not dead. He is a living God. Jesus is not dead. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin and death. But he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. He is alive. And he is with us today. He says to us, "Come and have breakfast." He wants us to begin each day by coming to him and having breakfast with him. Jesus invites us in Revelation 3:20: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."

Like the disciples, we go through many ups and downs in our life of faith and mission. We know what it feels like returning empty-handed from fishing, because our nets are often empty. But Jesus encourages us to throw our nets again. He also says to us, "Come and have breakfast." The Risen Christ wants us to be fully restored from our failures by trusting in him. May God help us to come and have breakfast with the Risen Christ!