

As he finished the job interview, the Human Resources Manager asked a young engineer, fresh out of MIT, “What starting salary were you looking for?” The engineer said, “In the neighborhood of \$200,000 a year, depending on the benefits package.” The interviewer said, “Well, what would you say to a package of 5 weeks of vacation, 14 paid holidays, full medical and dental, company matching retirement fund up to 50% of salary, and a company car leased every 2 years - say, a red Corvette?” The Engineer sat up straight and said, “Wow! Are you kidding?” The interviewer replied, “Yeah, ... but you started it.”

The Gospel story this morning is the last resurrection appearance in John’s telling of the Jesus story and there is a lot in it to look at. This account follows on the heels of last week’s telling of Jesus’ appearance to Thomas. Remember that one happened in Jerusalem in the locked upper room where the disciples were hiding after the crucifixion.

The appearance that John tells about this morning, must have happened at some later time. Not only are the disciples not hiding for fear of their lives anymore, but they have also now gone back to Galilee and have resumed their lives as commercial fishermen. Now stop and think about that for a minute.

These disciples have been with Jesus for at least a couple of years – some of them for the full three years of His ministry – and they have seen so many miraculous occurrences that they cannot even count them. They have seen Him give sight to the blind. They watched as – with words alone – He cured a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. They witnessed Jesus walk on the surface of the lake and were equally amazed the day that, simply by speaking to them, He calmed a crowd of men who intended to stone a young woman for adultery. Jesus told that crowd to look into their own hearts before the stoning and just like that, the men all went home. And the miracles of abundance – they certainly remembered those!

In Cana, at a wedding, He heard that the wine had run out before the party was ending, and he turned gallons of water into the best wine any of them had ever drunk. And there was the time that He had fed over 5,000 people with a few fish and a couple loaves of bread.

And yet ... as soon as He was gone, so were they.

Jesus appeared in that upper room in Jerusalem and breathed the Holy Spirit on them to prepare them to go out into the world in ministry. But as soon as He left, there they were, back in Galilee, back doing what they were comfortable doing – fishing – no matter what it was that He wanted them to do. Is it any wonder that we who live roughly two thousand years after Jesus' earthly ministry sometimes seem to lose our faith and fall back into old, familiar patterns? Here were these men who

had first-hand knowledge of exactly what Jesus was capable of, and *they* couldn't keep the faith when He left them – what hope is there for us? The hope we get from this story, just as the disciples did that day.

They left Jerusalem and went home to Galilee, back to what they had known before He arrived in their lives. Jesus knew that. He knew just how shaky their faith was at that point and so he miraculously appeared to them again – providing for both their spiritual and physical needs, so that they might believe and go out to do the work He gave them.

He appeared on shore after they had caught nothing throughout the night and informed them that they should throw the net over the right side of the boat. When they did, they got the catch of all catches – so many fish that the net should have broken, but it didn't. And when they got to the shore, He already had the meal prepared and offered for them to sit and eat with Him. The disciples needed and Jesus provided.

Have you ever been at the point where your faith seemed dried up, used up, or otherwise nonexistent? Have you ever had so many bad things happen to you in such a short period of time that you threw up your hands and said, “What's the use? If you're there at all God, you sure aren't there for me.” People we love go away, or get sick, or die. We look at our jobs and think about the dead end there in front of us. Our children act up, act out or otherwise worry us to death – or our parents

have reached the point where we feel as if we're raising a whole new batch of willful children. Our finances weigh heavy on us. It's tax time. The amount the government extracts from us every year is painful – almost as painful as the amount the credit card and insurance companies are charging us. Inflation is rearing its ugly head again. And Russia seems intent on pushing the world into a global war.

Where is God in all this? How can we have faith? *Why* should we have faith? From time to time, these questions, or ones like them, come to us all. Theologians refer to those times as spiritual deserts, the times where we just spiritually run dry. So what's the answer?

The answer to these times in which everything seems so overwhelming, is to open your eyes and look to see what is there, on the shore. **IT'S THE LORD**, as John tells us this morning. And He has instructions for us, and He's ready to provide for us.

Cast your nets over the *right* side of the boat. That's what He told the disciples. Cast your nets over the *right* side – **MY** side of the boat – the correct side of the boat, and I will provide for you. That is Jesus' message, both to the disciples and to us. Don't spend your time fishing where there are no fish. Come over to **MY** side of the boat and you'll find everything you need.

Now listen to that again.

Cast your nets on the ***RIGHT*** side, on Jesus' side of the boat and there you'll find – ***NOT*** everything you ***WANT*** – but everything you ***NEED***.

The disciples that day ***NEEDED*** a miraculous catch of fish to put them back where they longed to be, both spiritually and emotionally. Jesus gave it to them. What is your need? Cast your net to the right side of the boat and know that Jesus will provide. But keep your eyes open, because it may not look exactly the way you expect it to. Just as the disciples didn't recognize Jesus at first, so also do we not recognize when God is acting in our lives to offers ways out of our misery.

How will it look for you, in your life, when you receive the abundant grace and healing power of God's love in Christ? I don't know. I cannot answer that question for you – only you can answer it for yourself. But I know two things for certain:

1. God ***ALWAYS*** provides. It has happened throughout my life – and I have absolute faith that it will continue to happen. And
2. If we're not observant and careful, we'll miss it when God comes in – doing God's work, providing for our needs. And as a result, we'll miss the blessings and possibly continue in our misery.

The disciples lost their faith and Jesus was there to help them, to support them, and to provide for them. It's just as true today as it was two thousand years ago. See Jesus on the shore. He may look like someone you know. He may have words

you've heard before. He may give you a gift that you didn't expect. But He's there, as sure as He arose on Easter morning. And if you listen to Him, He'll tell you where and how to fish, and when you come ashore will have food enough prepared for you.

Today, give thanks that we have experienced God in Christ in our own lives. Experience it again in the food and drink of new and unending life in Christ. Look for Him in the Body and Blood. Listen for Him to call you. Then answer that call and be ready for God to do something new in you – right here today – as God provides the things you need and gives you reason again to believe in the risen Lord.

In the name of the Risen Lord, Amen.