

## MESSAGE FOR SUNDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021

Psalms 30

John 21:1-19

Have you ever wanted to run away? I know I have. When I was away at school I had a quiet place behind the school swimming pool up on a hill. From this vantage point I could see all the way to Glastonbury Tor and I would mentally will myself to be somewhere in the distance. Anywhere that was not school.

When life gets difficult, when we become lost, confused, and afraid, when the changes of life are not what we wanted or think we deserve we tend to run away. We try to go back to the way it was before – to something safe, something familiar. Often, we revert to old patterns of behaviour and thinking. Even when we know better and do not want to go backwards it seems easier than moving forward.

Peter and six others have returned to the sea. They have left Jerusalem. They have come home to the Sea of Tiberias, the place where it all began. Discipleship, the upper room, the cross, the empty tomb, the house with its locked doors are some 80 miles to the South. Peter decides to go fishing. He knows how to do that. It is familiar and comfortable. Perhaps it takes him back to life before Jesus. The others are quick to join him.

My hunch, however, is that Peter is not really trying to catch fish as much as he is fishing for answers. We can leave the places and even the people of our life, but we can never escape ourselves or our life. Wherever you go, there you are. Peter may have left Jerusalem, but he cannot get away from three years of discipleship, the last supper, the arrest, a charcoal fire, denials, a crowing rooster. He cannot leave behind the cross, the empty tomb, the house with his doors locked tight, the echoes of "Peace be with you." So he fishes.

Peter fishes for answers. What have I done? What were those three years about? Who was Jesus? Where is he? Who am I? What will I do now? Where will I go? What will happen to me? Peter is searching for meaning, a way forward, a place in life. Peter is dark night fishing.

We have all spent time dark night fishing, asking the same questions as Peter, looking for our place in life, seeking peace, and some sense of understanding and meaning. Often dark night fishing happens in the context of the failures, losses, and sorrows of our lives. It happens when we come face to face with the things we have done and left undone. We have all been there, fishing for answers in the darkness.

"Friends, haven't you any fish?" Jesus asks. Which is more a statement of fact than a question. Jesus is not asking for a fishing report. He is commenting on the reality and emptiness of Peter's and the other disciples' lives. Peter is living in the pain and the past of Good Friday. He is fishing on the Good Friday side of the boat and the net is empty. There are no fish, no answers, no way forward. The nets of dark night fishing contain nothing to feed or nourish life.

I wonder if we have been fishing on the wrong side of the boat? Jesus seems to think so. "Cast your net to the right side of the boat," Jesus says, the resurrection side of the boat. This movement of the net from one side of the boat to the other symbolizes the disciples' resurrection. It is the great Passover. Jesus calls us to move out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life. In so doing we see and proclaim, "It is the Lord".

Emptiness gives way to the abundance of a net full of fish, large ones, a hundred and fifty-three of them.

Darkness dawns a new day with new light.

A new charcoal fire kindles hospitality in place of the cold ashes of rejection.

The last supper has become the first breakfast.

Confessions of love overcome denials of fear.

“It is the Lord.” Dark night fishing is over. This is the incredible message of Easter. Good Friday is real. Pain, death, and sin are a reality of life. But the greater and final reality is Easter resurrection. “Follow me,” Jesus says, “and live as resurrected people. Follow me and fish in a different place. Follow me.” “Follow me” is the invitation to examine where we have been fishing. On which side of the boat do we fish? On which side of the cross do we live? Good Friday or Easter resurrection.