

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
May 1st, 2022, Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 9:1-20 Psalm 30 Revelation 5:11-14 John 21:1-19

Diana Butler Bass has a video commenting on John's gospel passage today called the emperor's breakfast for Caesar's breakfast.

Last week the disciples were huddled in the upper room behind locked doors out of fear, this week they are trying to put their lives back together after their world has come to an end. The person they've been following all this time thinking he was the Messiah is now dead. The only thing they know to do is to try to put back together their lives the way they were before Jesus came along.

They're fishing on the sea of Tiberius. It is no longer called the sea of Galilee therefore the emperor has won, and the dead Jesus has lost.

And Jesus appears to them and has them go fishing again and they catch 153 large fish. Diana Butler Bass says we notice that John mentions 153 fish and we don't notice the word large. The sea of Tiberius belongs to the emperor and everything in it. Every fish removed from the sea is taxed fishermen are even taxed for fishing on the sea. She goes on to say the large fish are for the rich and powerful. It is the large fish which are sent to Rome.

So, Jesus is taking the large fish meant for Caesar's breakfast and feeding them to the disciples. So, Jesus is showing that the emperor hasn't won, Jesus has been raised from the dead and is feeding them with the emperor's fish. They don't have to give up hope and the story continues.

In a way Jesus is comparing himself and contrasting himself with the emperor at the same time. Jesus is feeding his followers like the emperor, and like the emperor expects something from them for feeding them. The emperor demands loyalty and devotion in response to feeding his followers. Jesus asks Peter three times to feed his sheep, tend his lambs. This seems to mean we cannot go back to before we began our walk in faith and our relationship with the risen Christ. But why would we want to? The hope and possibilities are in some ways beyond our imagination so why would we go back?

Maybe because our understanding of God is too small. Then our spiritual journey can be about recognizing and celebrating the hope which God brings into our lives and the possibilities which are beyond our wildest dreams.

There is an old joke which asks how do you make God laugh? Tell him your plans for the future.

Has any of us had our lives unfold exactly as we planned? I would say not, but still God has gotten you this far and will continue to give you hope and if you're open to it, abundant life. I would guess this abundant life is about feeding and being fed by and with other people which gives us meaning and value.

Amen