

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
'Church at Home' - Sunday 19th April 2020

Welcome

“Welcome to our ‘Church at Home’ service for the 19th April. Here you’ll find everything you need to worship at home today; bible readings, prayers, and a sermon to read and reflect on. I pray that it will be a blessing and an encouragement to you today.” - Rev. Andrew Gill

Reading from Psalm 16

*Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.*

*I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing.”*

I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

*Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure.*

Collect for the second Sunday of Easter

Almighty and eternal God,
the strength of those who believe
and the hope of those who doubt,
and we, who have not seen, have faith
and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing,
who is alive and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Reading John 21:1-14

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Sermon

This morning we are looking at the last chapter of John's gospel. For much of this year we have been studying though parts of this book, looking at the miraculous signs and then account of his death and resurrection. In John 20:29-31 we come to these verses, *"Jesus said to Thomas, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.' Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."*

And you would expect that to be the end of the book, leaving the reader with the question of what we believe about Jesus. But that's not the finish, there is one final story John wants to tell. He wants to show what comes next after belief. Jesus wants believers who follow him; who live a life of daily dependance on his grace and to testify to the truth of who he is.

The story begins in the days following the resurrection and the disciples are back at Galilee. I imagine they were still trying to understand and process all that happened over the last few days, and perhaps trying to decide about what to do next. When Peter announces that he is going fishing, the others join him but all night they catch nothing.

A voice on the shore shouts out to them, “Lads! have you not caught any fish?”

“No”, they answer. The voice belonged to Jesus but they didn’t realise it was him, not yet anyway.

He tells them to cast the net on the other side. And they follow his instruction and catch an amazing 153 fish! This is a miracle, and John reflects and realises that it can only be Jesus. He says to Peter, “It is the Lord!” (v.7) Peter excitedly puts on his coat and jumps into the water and swims to shore, leaving the others to struggle with the fish. When they arrive they see that Jesus has prepared breakfast for them and invites them to join him.

The point Jesus is making is very simple; you can’t live the Christian life without him. It is impossible to do it in your own strength. If you are not living life in daily dependence on his grace, then your net will always be empty. As Jesus had already told them, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do...nothing.” (John 15:15)*

Every morning Jesus prepares a breakfast for us and invites us to join him. He has prepared the grace, the strength, the wisdom we need for the day. And we receive it through the disciplines of prayer, bible reading and trusting in him.

The disciples do not reject Christ's invitation or make excuses of being too busy. They come to him and as they eat, they know him and their confidence in his resurrection grows.

After the meal there is some business to discuss, there is something that needs to be addressed. The last time Peter was around a charcoal fire, it was the night of Jesus' trial when he denied to be a follower of Jesus three times. So Jesus asks him, "Do you truly love me more than these?" (v.15)

"You know that I do", Peter replies. Jesus says "Feed my Sheep" This happens three times, by the third time Peter is grieved, because after the third time he understands Jesus is referencing his denials. However this is not a moment of shame, this is a process of forgiveness where Jesus is reinstating Peter in his role as an apostle and he instructs him to feed his sheep. And Peter does, he will go on to do great and amazing things for God. After Pentecost he will preach and thousands will believe and follow Jesus.

John finishes his book by saying that there is so much more to write, that even if the whole world was full of books, and everyone of them was about Jesus, there would still be more. (v.25)

There's always more. Christ is enough to fill eternity. The risen Jesus, invites us all to follow him, to go on a journey to each day discover more of the fullness of who he is. To believe the truth that he is the Christ, the Son of God. To daily depend on his grace, to talk with him in prayer, and to play our part in sharing his gospel with the whole world!

A prayer from here for everywhere in this global pandemic

Lord of all the earth,

In this moment of global pandemic, our horizons are suddenly expanded. Hard borders on the island of Ireland, trade borders in the Irish Sea, building bridges to Scotland, seem so much less important when politics is paralysed and retail has receded. All our insular red lines are increasingly fading to pink. Suddenly we are interested in what is happening in Italy, keen to learn from the experiences of countries like China.

Impress upon us in these days that we really are global disciples: part of a bigger church and world, called to live with love locally to those from whom we are socially distanced, but also to pray with passion for those from whom we are spatially distanced and will never meet.

Hear our prayer, for nations near and far, for peoples of every tribe and tongue, for the global effort to fight this virus. Remind us that,

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,
Does his successive journey's run;
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more.*

Lord of all peoples, hear our prayer from this place, for your world.
In Jesus' Name, Amen