

John 21:1-17

May 1, 2022

When the disciples come ashore with their net full of fish, they see a charcoal fire. Jesus made it, and He had both fish and bread laid out on it. “*Come and have breakfast,*” He says, and Jesus takes the bread and fish and gives them to His disciples.

Now this charcoal fire would not have meant much to six of these disciples. Just that it was time for breakfast. But to Simon Peter that charcoal fire would have meant a whole lot more. The last time he was by a charcoal fire was in the courtyard of Caiaphas on the night when Jesus was betrayed. Peter was warming himself by the fire along with others. And three times he was given the opportunity and privilege to acknowledge that, yes, he was a disciple of Jesus. But all three times he denied Him instead.

It would have been nearly impossible for Peter to have erased from his mind the image of that fire. For later the next day, the very Lord he had denied before the charcoal fire, died while hanging from a cross.

In our text it is now perhaps two weeks later. Peter surely hasn't gotten much sleep over this time. And I wonder how many times he has had nightmares in his sleep, the image of the charcoal fire with its flames dancing and mocking him. Peter is not sure anymore if he is a disciple of Jesus. He fell from grace. He disowned his Lord. What would prevent Jesus from disowning him? It's what he deserved.

When John, in the boat, recognized Jesus saying, “*It is the Lord!*” Peter jumped into the sea and swam to the shore. He had to be with Jesus. It's like when he got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But this time no wave could stop him. Peter was desperate for Jesus.

But was Jesus desperate for him? Would He count him again as His disciple? Would He forgive him and restore him?

Peter gets to the shore and there it is, a charcoal fire. Oh Jesus, what are You doing to poor Peter? He has had nightmares about this fire. He has been trying to put it out of his mind. And now, on the shore, You build a charcoal fire as Peter comes to You?

If anyone is in need of psychiatric counseling, it's Peter. But no, what he really needs is Jesus. Because what Jesus has to give him is grace upon grace. He has just given Peter and the other six disciples a net full of fish. But that's nothing compared to the true riches. Peter needs forgiveness. He needs to be assured that Jesus accepts him, that he is His disciple.

I don't know how you have been sleeping lately, and if you have been having nightmares. I do know, however, that you need Jesus as much as Peter did and as I do. But we do not always act like we do. Peter jumped into the sea to swim to Jesus when he heard it was the Lord. But the other six disciples stayed in the boat. They, too, came to shore where Jesus was. But they didn't come with the same desperation as Peter. They were sinners just like Peter. But they did not have ghoulish images of a charcoal fire dancing in their heads.

And so here you are today on the shore with Jesus. Maybe, like Peter, you are here desperate for Him. Or maybe you came here more casually like the other six disciples did. And still, you are

here because Jesus is here. When you hear that “*It is the Lord!*” you come. It’s not just a man in a white robe, or just bread and wine, or just words being spoken here to you. “*It is the Lord!*” here in and through these things for you.

And because you and I are sinners like Peter was, whether we act desperate for Jesus or not, He has and gives to us what we need.

After breakfast Jesus asked Peter three times, “*Do you love Me?*” And three times Jesus said to him, “*Feed My sheep.*” Three times Peter had denied Jesus. Three times Jesus lovingly restores Peter. “Yes, Peter, you are My disciple. You denied Me, but I forgive you. I just fed you with bread and fish, and now I send you out to feed My sheep. Not with food for their bellies, but with the Bread of Life, with the food of salvation.”

That charcoal fire would no longer be a source of nightmares for Peter. Because right here on the shore by this charcoal fire that Jesus made, Peter was forgiven and restored to discipleship.

There is no charcoal fire here this morning. Jesus already endured the fire, the fire of God’s wrath against sinners. In that fire on the cross, the food of salvation was prepared for you. And so, to you now Jesus says, “*Come and have breakfast.*” The food of His own body and blood for you is ready.

Every time you come here to this shore, Jesus is here with the breakfast you need the most. Whether you have denied Him with your words or with your actions during the past week, or whether your sins were less grievous or more grievous than that, there is forgiveness here and it is for you.

This story on the shores of Lake Tiberius in our text teaches us that there is nothing better than being with Jesus for breakfast. This is intimate fellowship with Him. There is forgiveness, there is restoration. If Jesus can forgive and restore Peter, He can do the same for you. And He does, my friend. You are forgiven of your sins. You are His disciple.

And there is coming to you a day when your boat will land on a different shore, the heavenly shore. And Jesus will be there, for He will take you there, and He will welcome you, His forgiven child. “*Come,*” He will say to you, “*and have breakfast.*” The breakfast that will continue forever. Amen.