

Sermon

Easter 3C May 4, 2025

John 21:1-19

We have now entered the post-resurrection period of Easter. Easter Day was all about resurrection, the empty tomb, and the surprise of that day. Last week we revisited the Day of Resurrection (and the following Sunday) with Jesus appearing to the ten, and then eleven, disciples in that locked room. Today is a time “after these things.” Today we are firmly in the time between Resurrection and Ascension.

Today’s gospel gives us a charge to feed, tend, and feed. That charge is prefaced with a look at abundance, seen in both the passage from Revelation and the gospel, and partnership – two things we need to remember in this post-resurrection time as we work to live into that charge from Jesus.

We see abundance in the reading from Revelation when John sees “myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” gathered around the throne of God. This particular passage comes from a section of Revelation where John sees a vision of heavenly worship. One of the things Revelation consistently shows us is that God’s desire is to have as many people as possible drawn to him. God’s abundance is shown not only with the myriads of myriads, but also in what God ultimately provides.

We see abundance in the gospel when Jesus tells the disciples to fish on the other side of the boat and they catch so many fish they couldn’t bring the net into the boat.

This story of abundance is similar to the story of the feeding of the five thousand in that people who had nothing were provided enough. We are reminded that if left to our own devices, we will dwell in scarcity: Andrew’s lament of only having five barley loaves and two fish, and the all night fishing expedition that resulted in empty nets.

The idea of scarcity doesn’t come from not having what you need, it comes from the fear and worry that you don’t have enough. It also comes from a fear that if you share what you have, you will have less. The idea of abundance, though, comes from the faith and belief that what you have is plenty, and what you have is worth sharing, not hoarding.

If we live with eyes of abundance, then we won't fear that we don't have enough, but we will live with the belief that we have plenty, and that what we have is enough to share.

In addition to abundance, this gospel passage also touches on partnership.

In this post-resurrection story, Jesus is on the beach with bread and some fish cooking on a fire. After they had caught the fish and come ashore, Jesus tells the disciples to bring some of their fish over to him. Why? Why ask them to bring fish when he already had fish cooking? Because in this act, the disciples share in the same work as Jesus.

When Peter hauled the net ashore, he was, in a sense, doing the very same thing Jesus was doing. Earlier in the gospel, Jesus says that those who come to him are drawn to him by the Father, and that when he is lifted up he will draw all people to himself. Peter is drawing the net of fish toward Jesus. In listening to the voice of Jesus on where to fish and bringing those fish to Jesus, the disciples are aligning themselves with the work of Christ. By extension, we align ourselves with the disciples and Christ when we work to draw people to God.

That partnership of abundance translates into the work we do; and that work comes from the three directives Jesus gives to Peter.

The three questions asked of Peter are meant to atone for his three earlier denials. After each question, Peter is given a directive: feed, tend, and feed the sheep. What Jesus did, he now asks Peter to do. During Jesus' time on earth he physically fed people and he tended to their needs. After his resurrection he fed his disciples with a different kind of food. Peter is now called to do the same thing: feed, tend, and feed.

It is now our turn to do these things. We are now partners with Christ reflecting and living into his abundance. We are called to feed, tend, and feed people.

In Jesus' three questions, not only is there atonement for past denials, but it makes clear that there is a direct link between professed love and our actions. By tapping into our abundance we can help feed the physical hunger of others. By being

present to those around us, we can tend to their needs. By talking about our faith and inviting them to come and see, we can feed their spiritual hunger.

Like Peter, we are charged with feeding, tending, and feeding the people of God – which means everybody. For us to do that, we need to see ourselves as partners with Christ, joining him in an effort to draw all people to him. We must also live into faithful abundance, not focusing on loss and what we don't have, but focusing on the abundant gifts we have been given and how we can share them.

If we see ourselves as partners with Christ, living into the abundance of God, then we will feed, tend, and feed the sheep Christ is drawing to himself. And if we approach the feeding, tending, and feeding of God's people with an attitude of abundance, then we will indeed see myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

Amen.