

Easter tide 2021

John 21:1-14 (*Jesus appears to disciples while they are fishing*)

“MORE THAN ENOUGH”

Bishop John L. Hopkins

It is a joy to share a message with you in these days after Easter. We can still proclaim, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” That is a beautiful phrase isn’t it?

On Easter Sunday—the Day of Resurrection—we proclaimed Jesus’ victory over sin and death. No longer are we full of sorry and without hope. Now, we are forgiven and free. Jesus acted on our behalf. Jesus is our Savior!

In the days following Easter, we are disciples who are becoming apostles to share the good news in our words and deeds. We have an identity and a mission. We act on behalf of Jesus. Jesus is our Lord!

That is why we say, “Jesus is our Lord and Savior.” He *saved* us in our brokenness so we can *serve* Him in our blessedness.

I have discovered that God comes to us when we are broken and when we are blessed. Jesus came to me in the Lenten Season of my 6th grade year. I was broken with fear and homesickness. My father was out of a job, we had no home, I was living with relatives, and I did not know when my family would be back together. I was lost not knowing what the future would hold.

And suddenly, out of nowhere, a miracle occurred for me in the middle of a Sunday evening worship service when I recognized the presence of Christ in my life. At that moment, I was made whole in my brokenness. I was saved from my fear, doubt, and disappointment, and claimed a blessed assurance that God was real.

Yes, Jesus comes to us when we are broken! Most people who share their faith stories talk about a time when they were broken, lost, or headed in the wrong direction. Many sermons tell stories of how Jesus can forgive us, heal us, mend our relationships, and save us when we receive Him into our life. And yet, knowing what Christ has done for us is not enough.

Jesus also comes to us when we are blessed! When we are filled to overflowing with beauty, love, creativity, and gratitude for meaningful relationships. That happened to me during the summer after my 9th grade year at Central High School in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. It was at Epworth Forest church camp in the North Indiana Conference only a couple of summers after I rejoined my family.

I matured early after my 6th-grade experience and put everything into school. My first year of High School was amazing. I was the starting quarterback on the 9th grade football team. I had a lead in the Freshman Class Play. I was a member of the Honor Roll. And, best of all, I was dating the future Homecoming Queen. Life was good!

By the time I arrived at Church Camp (they called it Senior High Institute) I was blessed and grateful for being back with my family and being affirmed in so many ways. Like most camps, the week was full of activities: sports, Bible study, preaching, skits, singing, and fun. This camp had also had a praise band from a Methodist College and a drama troupe from a Seminary to who served as role models for us.

Thursday was Commitment Night. Following an amazing worship service that reminded us how much God loved us, we made a vow of silence. For an hour I walked and prayed around the campus, and watched other students do the same. Then we returned to the auditorium for a time of Commitment and Holy Communion.

When the invitation came to give your life to Jesus Christ, it was not only to be a pastor or a missionary (although that was to be considered). It was to make a commitment to follow Jesus wherever He leads you, to lean on Him, to trust Him, and give your all for Him.

I remember a lump in my throat and tears in my eyes as I stood up from my seat and made my way to the altar. I knelt before God, not because I was broken but because I was so blessed, I wanted to be a blessing to others. I did not decide to be a pastor until after college, but I knew Jesus had acted on my behalf. Now, I wanted to serve him and live for others.

Have you ever recognized Jesus in your abundance? When your life was full? When you were blessed?

In our scripture, the disciples did not recognize the Resurrected Jesus until their nets were full and they shared a breakfast of fish and bread.

In Mark's gospel, chapter 14:28, immediately following the Last Supper, Jesus predicts Peter's denial and says, "*But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.*"

Later in Mark's account of the resurrection, chapter 16:7, the women at the tomb were told to "*Go, tell the disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.*"

Our scripture lesson is an epilogue to John's gospel that fulfills the words in Mark. Here we have a resurrection appearance of Jesus in Galilee over 70 miles north of Jerusalem where the crucifixion took place. Jesus appears to Peter and the disciples *after* they have gone back to work and continued their daily living. Isn't this just like Jesus to track us down and meet us where we are?

This resurrection appearance is told in a "*boat load*" of contrasts:

On one side it is nighttime; and in the darkness there are empty nets

On the other side it is daybreak; and the catch is so great the nets are overflowing.

On one side, the disciples are remembering the good ole days with Jesus and are saying "we had hoped that he was the one"

On the other side, the disciples all recognize Jesus and look to a future with hope.

On one side, Peter is still trying to prove his worth after he has denied his Jesus three times in His moment of need.

On the other side, Peter recognizes a new opportunity to express his love and willingness to serve by jumping into the water and swimming to his Lord.

On one side Jesus has been crucified, dead, and buried

On the other side, Jesus appears unexpectedly and gives new life

We have all been in that boat, haven't we? At some point, each of us has been caught between brokenness and blessing; scarcity and abundance; between despair and hope; between the grave and a faith that will not die.

As mature Christians, we must acknowledge that much of life is bittersweet. We have had those experiences when we are down and were surprised by joy. And, we have had those times when our joy was tempered by some unexpected setback. Like being excited about your daughter's wedding and discovering on the day of the rehearsal that she has run up a large credit card debt. Or going to meet your son at his high school graduation and learning he had an accident that totaled the family car. Or saying a final "goodbye" to a loved one and having a new grandchild born as a sign of hope.

Joy and sorrow can be close together. And Jesus is always close by.

In our scripture, it is interesting that Jesus was on the shore calling out to the disciples in the boat and they did not recognize him! Like on the Walk to Emmaus in Luke's gospel (24:13), Jesus is among the disciples and they are so busy with their worries and their work that they do not recognize him.

When they listened to Jesus and cast their nets on the right side of the boat, they made an overwhelming catch—so large that they were not able to haul it in—and yet the nets did not tear! They had *More than Enough!* When they recognized how much they had been blessed they could face the realities before them. They could face the future.

A Christian saying goes, "*When the praises go up, the blessings come down.*" Not in a magical way. It is when we remember the goodness of God, we experience his power again. That is why worship is so important. Reading the scripture, repeating the creeds, and singing hymns remind us of what God has already done.

Today, I want to tell you that faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is more than just looking backwards! We must anticipate the surprises God has in store for us.

Several years ago, church school class for children decided to make ceramic gifts during the Lenten Season. They wanted to surprise their parents with a gift on Easter Sunday.

Each child selected a gift to make. There were ceramic crosses, Easter eggs, butterflies, and other symbols of the Resurrection. Every week they would work on their gift by molding, glazing, painting, and firing the clay in an oven.

Finally, Easter Sunday came. The children carefully wrapped their gift and wrote a card to express love to their mother or father. “Dear Mom, Happy Easter! Love, Cate.” “To Mom and Dad, Christ is Risen! I love you, Billy.”

You can imagine how excited they became when the class was over and the parents came to pick them up. One little boy who was putting on his coat, waving goodbye, and picking up his gift at the same time, stumbled and let the gift fall out of his hand and make a loud crash on the floor. He looked up at his parents, tears came to his eyes, and he began to sob.

His father, not knowing what to do, said, “*It doesn’t matter... it really doesn’t matter.*” But the little boy’s mother was more sensitive to what had happened. She knelt down, gathered the boy into her arms and said, “*Oh, but it does matter. It matters a great deal.*” And she wept with her son.

To the father, the love between him and his son was secure. They had expressed love in the past and one broken gift would not destroy that love. But to the mother, who perhaps knew of the project and expected the joy her son would have giving it to her, the gift was a new expression of that love. And each new expression of love must be looked for and cherished.

In these days following Easter, we must look for and cherish new expressions of love from all our relationships.

For, there is a lot more broken in our world today than a ceramic gift. Political, racial, and economic divisions in our country and church have broken us apart. As some people have lost their jobs and cannot afford food, medical care, and housing. Others have benefitted from a growing stock market. Racial disparities in access to healthcare, employment, and quality education discourage us and make us angry. Projected divisions in our church cause us to hold back commitments to mission and ministry at a time when the world needs the hope of Jesus Christ more than ever.

And yet, in the middle of this brokenness, we are called to serve out of our abundance, to put the pieces back together again. Jesus needs people to cherish the work of reconciliation, justice, and peace. And people to weep when relationships are broken. Jesus needs people to represent His way of love and mercy and have hope that is not yet seen. Jesus needs people who can imagine a Beloved Community on earth as it is in heaven.

Can you be one of those people?

After the disciples came ashore, Jesus said to them, “*Come and have breakfast.*” None of the disciples dared to ask him, “*Who are you?*” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish. Just like when Jesus was feeding the 5000, there was more than enough for everyone. *More than enough!*

Jesus will appear when you are broken and when you are blessed. Be ready to recognize the Resurrected Christ in your life.

Live with Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You have "*More than Enough.*" Christ is risen!
Alleluia!