

Learning to Fish

by Stewart Ruch

The sermon emphasizes how the resurrection of Jesus transforms our daily lives through guidance and community engagement.

Duration: 25:06

Scripture: Matthew 4:19, Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15, John 10:10, John 21:1-17, Acts 2:42-47

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, Bishop Stuart Ruch discusses the story of Jesus revealing himself to his disciples after his resurrection. He emphasizes the significance of the story being a true account and highlights the abundance of fish caught by the disciples as a symbol of the abundant life Jesus offers. The sermon explores the themes of personal mission and the unity of the early church, emphasizing the importance of giving oneself fully to Jesus and his resurrection. Bishop Ruch encourages the congregation to live in the power of the resurrection and to be prepared for the many things Jesus wants to do in their lives.

Transcript

This is Church of the Resurrection in Wheaton, Illinois. This week's sermon, Learning to Fish, is by Bishop Stuart Ruch and is part two of the Resurrection School, Learning New Life from Jesus. Isn't that an amazing story? Just from the perspective of a masterful, short, short story, in itself it is just a masterpiece.

Now the fact that it's utterly and completely true makes it even more rich and available now for us to learn and to grow from. But I just can't help but comment on what a great story. The charcoal fire, the breakfast, the 153 fish.

What does that mean? I'm piquing your interest. All right, let's pray together. Father in heaven, we just thank you for the revelation of Jesus resurrected.

We thank you for every single resurrection appearance account given us in the Scriptures, that we might learn from them, that we might receive an impartation of the Holy Spirit in the teaching and ministry of your Word. For now impart the Holy Spirit to us, O Lord, that we may live resurrection lives as our Lord calls us to, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now you may be seated. Let me start with a question, and I think it's one of the sort of most important questions in regard to how we live our lives. Making the assumption that we do here at resurrection, that I

do personally, that the resurrection of Jesus bodily, factually is completely and absolutely true, making that assumption, how has the resurrection of Jesus from the dead changed your life? What's it changed? We celebrated the resurrection two weeks ago.

Have you been aware of maybe some way in which in light of the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that there's been a life change, a life alteration, a life transformation in some capacity? Our Executive Pastor Steve Williamson, also our worship pastor, led us in a devotional as a staff team last week after Holy Week, and it was a beautiful devotional, and he was saying to us as a staff team, it's good to finish Holy Week with something left. If you're new to resurrection, we do thirteen services in Holy Week. We tend to be rather all.

There's no nothing about Holy Week for us. We're all in all the time, literally around the clock, some of the services, and you do get depleted. And he was saying it's good to have something left emotionally, physically, spiritually, because there's so much the Lord wants to do after His resurrection.

There's so many things that happen in the power of Jesus living the resurrection. And indeed we're told in our passage today, John chapter 21, that this was Jesus revealed. Here He was revealed to His disciples.

It starts that way in verse one. Then verse 14 summarizes that as well. This was a revelation of our Lord Jesus, a revelation of the resurrection.

So it's in this account and in several accounts that the church has put forward for us to study during the season of Easter. So we had Easter Day, but Easter continues on now for several weeks. The church gives us these readings, these lessons, these teachings, so that we can understand how does the resurrection of Jesus change our lives now? That's the thrust of what's happening in the Bible lessons that we're given.

And what we see in today's lesson is that our daily lives are completely transformed by the resurrection life of Jesus. Our detail lives, our boring elements of our lives, the routine of our lives, the daily realities of our lives are completely transformed. They themselves go through a transformation as we personally do.

Our days go through a transformation in light of the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. That's the main idea I want you to hear this morning. And in light of our story, our text, there are two ways in which our daily lives are profoundly changed.

One is that we learn to fish, and we learn to fish with a guide. Fish with a fishing guide. It has an impact on our lives.

And secondly, we learn to fish and feast with friends. Fish with a guide. Fish and feast with friends.

If we could take that in and begin to give that real expression in our lives, then we begin to bridge the resurrection of Jesus with His resurrection power and how we live. Go on to the text you have in your bulletins there. We read that the disciples are in Galilee.

They've been told to go to Galilee by Jesus. So they've gathered in Galilee. This is where most of them are from and where Jesus is from.

He wants to have time with them in their hometown. And I refer to this in my Easter Day sermon. So they're there now.

They're in Galilee. They're not with Jesus right now. They have seen Jesus resurrected.

They have had an encounter with Him that's recorded in John earlier on. But now Jesus isn't there. And Peter, who's the leader of the group of kind of core pupils of Jesus, he led them.

He's kind of the leader of the core. There's seven of them gathered right now. He said, let's go fishing.

Now scholars read that, and they've had a lot of ideas. For example, is Peter depressed? Or do they wonder if Jesus will ever show up again? We don't know that. John doesn't say what's going on for them emotionally.

What we do know is that they're fishermen. What we do know is that they spent years upon years upon years in which fishing is an effortless, in so many ways, I mean strenuous, but in terms of intentionality, effortless routine that they step into. The comparison in my life is washing dishes.

They fish. I wash dishes. I'm effortless.

You should see me. I mean I can do it. I can do it with a blindfold on my eyes.

I can do it absolutely exhausted. I often do. I can do it early in the morning.

I can do it in the middle of the day. I can do it late at night. I can do it even while having a conversation, and I do not double-task well, but I can do that.

I wash dishes all the time. The sound of the water, the soap going on the sponge, the bubbles coming up. I got it.

I got it, right? So imagine the fishermen, right? They're getting in their boat. They've done this thousands of times, day in and day out, 300 plus days a year, unless there's a major festival or feast going on in their Jewish holiday. The net in their hands, they know that feel.

Creaking of the boat, they know that. This is what they do. This is daily life.

So they go into their daily lives. They return to what they know best, and it's there. It's there in the routine.

It's there in sort of the everyday sort of details of life. It's there that the resurrection of power of Jesus wants to come. There's a simplicity that's very important.

They would have been used to many regulations in their religious practices, many things in ways that's supposed to, things are supposed to happen. Well, actually what Jesus wants to do is be very, very clear about the way in which His resurrection transforms the daily life of those who now follow Him, the resurrected God. So we see that they actually are fishing, and our response to that in light of the resurrection power is to fish our lives.

Here's what I mean by the phrase, fish our lives. My father's a fisherman. He loves to fish, fishes at least once a week, lives in Naples, Florida, where he does a lot of saltwater fishing.

And my dad has spots he likes to fish. There's a mangrove island he likes to fish because he gets particular fish there, and any person that fishes has a river or a stream or a certain lucky spot. They fish that stream.

They fish that mangrove island. Well, our call in our lives, which are the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias and Galilee are synonymous, are the same, is we fish our lives. This is where we do the ministry of Jesus.

It's in our daily lives. You don't need to go somewhere else. Some are called to go somewhere else, praise the Lord.

But you don't have to go somewhere else or have some different job or have a different family or something that seems more blatantly ministerial to fish your life, because fishing for them was fishing. Yes, Jesus would talk about it as a metaphor for mission as well, but that's the point. That's the exact point is that our mission happens in our daily lives.

We have to be aware that it's right there for us, and we fish our lives. What is the nature of your Sea of Galilee? What do you do daily? How do you fish your life tomorrow morning when you're making breakfast? How do you fish your life when you get on the train? How do you fish your life when you walk into class? How do you fish your life? That's a very important question for Christians who want to live resurrection lives. How do you introduce your Sea of Galilee? So I had a fish my life moment many years ago as a younger parent.

I thought parenting was like dishwashing. I thought it just happened effortlessly. I just thought I see lots of people doing it, and they seem fine while they're doing it, so it can't be that hard.

And I thought actually when we had four kids under the age of six, it was really hard. And I didn't look effortless. If you knew me in those years, it didn't.

I looked tired all the time. People always come at me and say, you look so tired. I don't know if that was a compliment.

I'm not sure what that was supposed to be. You look so tired, Stuart. Yeah, I am.

I am really tired. I'm super tired. And I thought my mission life, my gospel life was diminished by all these kids I'm trying to help raise, and Kath and I are working on, and we're always exhausted.

We're always on the edge until I got clear. Wait a second. What if my mission life isn't separate from raising my kids? What if my mission life is raising my kids? Whoa, whoa, whoa.

What if this is my Sea of Galilee? What if Jesus wants to come to me on the shore and speak to me about this? And all of a sudden I begin to go, wait a second. I keep thinking it's something else. It's this.

Students, you fish your classroom. You fish your dorm life. Marketplace people, you fish the marketplace.

Mothers, fathers, you fish your family. Roommates, you fish your life situation. It's right there.

One of the devil's greatest endeavors is to make us think that we're never quite doing it. That someday we'll someday do it. We'll be involved in the gospel.

We'll be involved in mission. And what Jesus is saying in this revelation of himself at the resurrection is you fish your life now. Right now.

Day in and day out. And there's an abundance that will come if you hear his voice. Kath and I heard his voice amidst these early years, and we were trying to do daily scripture time with the kids, and Kath and I

said, you know, I'm going to do that more in the morning because they're more alert, and you're more alert.

I'm more alert. And at night we said, you know what? As part of our fishing our family, we're going to set up, as regularly as we can, evening prayer. We're going to do maybe five minutes of prayer.

We're going to pray together as a family. We're going to teach our kids how to pray out loud with us. We'll use the liturgy when we have enough strength.

If we don't have enough strength to even do that, we'll do three minutes of just prayer. But we're going to try to pray as regularly as possible. It's become a part of our rhythm.

It's been an abundance in our family life. But only because I finally got clear after six years, I got to fish my family life. But what makes fishing your life possible and only possible is having a guide.

My dad fishes with a guide every week. My dad's a good fisherman. Why does he fish with a guide? Because the guide's a better fisherman than he is.

He fishes with a guide because he catches more fish. Jesus is the guide. And this is really simple, but this is really, really, really important to get clear on.

The bridge between your life and the resurrection power of Jesus is learning how to hear Jesus say, child, fish the other side of the boat. Some of you know about that. Some of you do not.

The degree to which you know about that and want to understand that and want to press into that and want to learn that is the degree to which you will have the resurrection life of Jesus integrated in your life. And you'll begin to go, wait a second, daily life isn't just, I'm not just doing the life thing. Yet life is good.

Life is mission when Jesus is guiding you and directing you and speaking to you. Children, fish the other side of the boat. So all the talk about marketplace ministry and all the talk about we got to make sure that people understand what they're doing seven days a week, not just on Sunday.

It's all extremely important talk. But if we don't make the resurrection biblical link here, it'll just be talk. So I was on the phone with one of our missionaries, Father Gregory, who's called to Cambodia.

And Gregory would be the first to say, yes, Cambodia has an exotic element. But frankly, after you live there for three years, you also have everyday life. This is weird how everyday life works.

Everywhere you go eventually is everyday life. All right. So he's in Cambodia.

And he was talking about one of his parishioners who had called him that week and said, I had the most unusual experience, Father Gregory. Here's what happened. I was awakened from sleep at 2 a.m. I'm never awakened from sleep at 2 a.m. I was awakened from sleep at 2 a.m. And I was given the name of a Buddhist friend, most of Cambodians, the Khmer Buddhist.

And I was told to pray fervently for her, that there was some darkness threatening her. So I prayed for about a half an hour for this particular Buddhist. And I went to sleep.

Talking with another friend, she said, from our parish this morning. And my friend, before I could even share it, said, oh, I got to tell you about something that happened for me last night. I was awakened at 2

a.m. And I was given the name of a mutual friend that we have who's a Buddhist.

And they shared the name. And, of course, it was the same exact person because Jesus was saying, fish this side of the boat. And I need two, maybe there were more, we don't know, praying, fish this side of the boat.

So I don't know if they drew straws or how they decided who got to call the friend, the Buddhist friend. But somebody called the Buddhist friend and said, I have to tell you what happened last night. And not just me, but someone else that had no idea, both prayed simultaneously for you and for darkness to pass you.

She said, my mother went into the hospital with profound heart attack issues at 11 p.m. She was in a touch-and-go situation until 2 p.m. when everything broke medically. And she went into a place of full safety and health. And her heart recovered, literally, at around 2.15 a.m. It was everyday life.

I mean, what's more everyday than sleeping? I mean, we all do that. And Jesus, on the shore, said, put your net on this side. I want to bring in abundance.

Imagine the witness of that Buddhist woman, because that's what Jesus is always wanting to do. In different times, in different ways, thousands of different ways. So we fish with a guide.

This was very helpful to me as a busy dad, very engaging job that I have. I wasn't having enough relationships with people that were far from God, and I was really struggling with it. Because on my Saturdays, I don't have lots of time to hang out with people far from God.

I am at the soccer field for about six hours, because several of my kids play soccer. And so I just felt defeated by this opportunity to build friendships with non-Christians, which I'm always encouraging you to do, and I wasn't doing it. And then the Lord spoke to me.

He gave me a other side of the boat moment, and said, wait a second, Stuart. Take the soccer that you're doing with your kids. It's a holy twofer.

And begin to reach out to people around you at the soccer pitch, and at the soccer field, and among the coaches, and the students, and see this as your Sea of Galilee. And it changed everything. And I built a profoundly close friendship that I still have with somebody who's not received Christ yet.

But it's been a very rich, life-giving friendship for both of us, because I was able to say, okay, wait a second, what's more kind of regular and routine in the Ruck family life than soccer? Is there something in soccer that I'm called to step into that the Lord would empower? And He did. And there was abundance. Okay, speaking of abundance, we see 153 fish.

How can we not miss that amazing detail? So I'm going to tell you what it means that there's 153 fish. Well, actually, I'm going to quote two saints. I'm not qualified.

You've got to go to the saints on this one. So Augustine, one of the great theologians of the church, this is what Augustine said as to why there were 153 fish. It's a mystery.

That's the best he had. All right, that wasn't enough for me. I thought I need somebody better than Augustine.

I went to Pastor Matt Woodley. He's on our staff. He's kind of the Augustine of today.

He's at our church plant today, so I've got free reign. I said, Matt, why were there 153 fish? And he goes, oh, that's easy. He said, they're fishermen.

They always count their fish. All right, there you go. That's the best I got, 153, one way or the other.

What's the point? The point is, A, it really happened. It's a real story. And B, there were a whole bunch of them.

There were so many of them because there was an abundance because the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But you just can't. You may have life and have it abundantly.

153 large fish abundantly. Because when we live our daily lives, we live them in the past. We live them in the power of the resurrection.

We go fishing with a guide, but we also go fishing with our friends. What you get is a picture of personal mission, and then you get a picture of the holy church around the charcoal fire. We have the early, early, early church.

We're at the sunrise of the church around this charcoal fire, and we see that there are fire friends. There are people who are gathered around the fire, who have given themselves, their lives for the sake of Jesus and His resurrection. There's a kind of holy bonding that happens among us, that are giving everything we've got for the resurrection of Jesus.

That if it's not true that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, we are absolute fools, as Paul has said. And there's a kind of solidarity and bonding that happens among us. We're friends around the fire that Jesus Himself has built.

And they come around that fire, and we see the early church gathering around the fire. There's a bonding and a closeness that happens among those who serve Jesus together. This could be between husband and wife, and should be.

That's a vision of marriage. It's that kind of holy fire friends among roommates, among close friends, among our middle schoolers, our high schoolers, our college students. You need fire friends to live this life with.

Oh, I remember just the physical reality of exerting myself and the bonding that came from that in my August cross-country month. For every August, we would get back together as cross-country runners. We'd run two a day, morning and night.

And you just exert yourself, just like these fishermen were exerting themselves in the pulling in of these fish. And then afterwards, you just hang together and just feel the closeness. This translated when I became a working in mission on campuses within our Varsity Christian Fellowship.

And there was a fire friendship that developed among men and women that I worked closely with. I live that now in so many different capacities. It's one of the great gifts.

It's the church and the beauty of the church. You need this. It legitimates resurrection life.

In four months, we're going to launch res groups. I am so excited about launching res groups. There'll be groups of six to twelve people to help strengthen your local mission work, to help build community and

study God's Word together, receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit together.

We're going to inaugurate these. These are fire friendship groups. These are groups where you gather together in your work of the mission and you come together around the fire.

But here's what makes the fire, is you have to have the first friend. It's Jesus who gathered that fire. It's Jesus who built the charcoal.

It's Jesus who called them to bring their fish in. Jesus is the first friend. Indeed, in your work of fishing, you fish with your best friend.

For Americans, when we think of fishing, often we think solitary, on my own, maybe one fishing friend, hook, rod. That's not how they fish, right? So fishing for them was about nets, several people together, leaning over, bringing it in together. It's a beautiful picture of the church in action.

And it's Jesus, Jesus at the center of it all. Jesus, our first friend. Jesus, our best friend.

There's nothing too casual or pop culture, Christian pop culture, like about thinking about Jesus as your best friend. That's biblical. That's careful theological thinking.

It's very important that we have informal times with Jesus, as these friends of His had around a charcoal fire, with the sun rising, smelling of fish. You need that with Jesus. Now, we need the beauty of the liturgy and ceremony.

We need that as part of our lives as human beings and being trained by that. But let me be really clear, as somebody that embraces all of this, you need informal time with Jesus, too. You need walks with Jesus.

You need coffee with Jesus. You need to talk about the books you're reading with Jesus, and the things that you're thinking about with Jesus. One of John Paul II, Pope, a couple of decades ago, and someone that I admire greatly, one of his favorite things to do was to go on camping trips with young men and women that he cared for, and have holy communion services outdoors.

And I wonder if he was thinking about John chapter 21, where you engage Jesus, but it's more informal. You so need that in your life. And if you don't have that, I want to encourage you next week, how do you have an informal time with Jesus, your first friend? He's going to give you now His feast.

When it says that He took the bread, you remember that little phrase there? It's there in John chapter 21, He took the bread. That phrase is taken directly from John chapter 6. And in both cases, John chapter 6 and John 21 are pointing toward Eucharist. The phrase is actually used here, He took the bread.

You'll hear it in the liturgy. That's because we rally around the fire of the Spirit. We rally around the feast of Jesus who gives His life for us.

That's what a first friend does, so that you can then give your life for others out in your Sea of Galilee. We're going to move into confirmation now. Here's confirmation.

John 21. Here's confirmation. The call to be empowered, the laying on of hands for the sake of mission, for the sake of taking the gospel and the resurrection power of Jesus Christ into daily life.

That's at the heart of confirmation is the impartation of the Holy Spirit for mission. Second is the impartation of the Holy Spirit for the unity of the church, the life of the church around our first friend Jesus who gives us the feast of Himself and the friendships that we know globally and through time in the life of the church. So if you're like, I don't know what confirmation is, this is what confirmation is.

The laying on of hands for mission, the laying on of hands for the unity and the ministry of friendship with Jesus and one another in the church. Let's fish with our guide. Let's feast and fish with our friends.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thanks for listening.

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