

St. Giles' Episcopal Church
April 18, 2010, Easter 3
John 21:1-19
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see you. Open our ears to hear you. Open our hearts to love you. And open our hands to serve you. Amen.

The Gospel is what we preach here at St. Giles' Church – in words, in worship, in life shared together, in outreach to communities beyond this place. The Gospel – the “Good News.” What is this “good news” we preach and live?

We preach the good news of Christ crucified and raised from the dead. We preach the good news that God loved the world so much that he sent his only son into the world, to live human life with us and to bring us the healing compassion of God. We preach the good news that Jesus, the Messiah, God's anointed one, loved us so much that he bore in his mind and heart and flesh the worst that evil could do, without retaliation and with care for the people he loved and connection to God, to his last breath on the cross. We preach the good news that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by God. On Easter morning, the disciples found not the corpse of the master they loved, but an empty tomb. We celebrate the resurrection and preach the good news of the risen Lord.

This morning's reading from the gospel of John is the account of one of the appearances of the risen Jesus to his lost and grieving followers. Some of the men were together. We can imagine that they had talked and wept and shared the anguish of their broken hearts until they had nothing left to say. Perhaps now they were hungry and restless and afraid. So Simon Peter announces that he is going fishing – a familiar activity which would place demands on his body, thus offering a respite from grieving.

Quickly the others say they will join him. Out they go, but not a fish all night. No relief from the empty darkness.

Until the light of dawn, when a man on the beach calls to them and says, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” “No.” “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” As soon as they follow his instructions, they have more fish than they can haul in. And so they recognize their Lord. Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, is the same Lord they knew before the crucifixion – the Lord who cares for human need, who provides abundantly for us, who guides us and calls us to him. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This is the “good news” we preach and live! This is the foundation of our Christian hope. God in Christ has triumphed over evil and death. Christ will come again, in glory, and his Kingdom of love and peace will never end.

We live in the time between the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of Christ’s eternal kingdom. What shall we do?

Look for the risen Lord. Let’s not miss the signs of Christ’s life! Look for hope in the midst of despair. Look for self-giving love. Look for compassion. Look for hungry people being fed. Look for sick and imprisoned people being visited. Look for healing. Look for people pressing on in spite of hardship. Look for faith in God and God’s goodness. Look for love in the community of Christ’s followers.

And listen for Jesus. What is Jesus saying to you? What is Jesus asking? After Jesus had provided the disciples with breakfast, he spoke to Simon Peter. “Simon son of John, do you love me? Simon son of John, do you love me? Simon son of John, do you love me?” Remember that Simon Peter had denied Jesus three times before the

crucifixion. Now he has three opportunities to affirm his love for Jesus. “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”

If we search our hearts, we will see that in our lives we have all denied Jesus at times, in many different ways. But Jesus doesn’t give up on us because of that. He continues to call us, to question us. “Do you love me?” Can we answer, from the depths of our hearts, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you?” I pray that each of us can.

Then we need to keep listening. The conversation isn’t over. Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.” In other words, “show your love for me, just as I showed my love for you, in action.” Christian love is active, self-giving, compassionate love. Jesus showed us that love in his life and death and resurrection. The risen Lord calls us to allow his life to grow in our lives, so that others can see Christ at work in us.

I would encourage all of us to look at our lives and ask ourselves how we are showing Jesus our love for him, day by day, in action. Ask Jesus for guidance. We are sometimes like the disciples who were fishing that night – we work and work in our own ways and achieve nothing. We need guidance. When we listen to Jesus and do what he asks, the results are sometimes staggering, like the net full of fish that daybreak at the Sea of Tiberias.

The risen Lord is here, among us. In a few minutes we will answer his invitation to breakfast and receive from him the bread of life and the cup of salvation. Let us come and offer our love to Christ and ask him to lead us, individually and as a body, so that his love may shine through our lives, a witness to the glory of God. Amen.