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John 21:1-14
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What is a familiar activity for you? When times are tough, what is it that you go back to? Something that you know how to do well enough that you don't even have to think about it? Is it singing? Playing the piano? Knitting or Crocheting? Is it reading? Is it walking on the beach? Is it making cards? Kayaking? Fishing? Writing?

Our story begins this morning with Peter, gotta love him, impulsively announcing to the other disciples, "I'm going fishing." And you can just hear the others saying, "I'm there." "Count me in." "Here for it."

I guess he was tired of sitting behind closed and locked doors, waiting for Jesus to maybe or maybe not appear again and tell them what to do. But not quite ready to go back to healing and preaching the good news. I can empathize with his desire to get up and do something. The disciples leap up saying, "we'll go with you," and together they make the trek from Jerusalem where they had been laying low since the crucifixion and Easter, to the Sea of Tiberius/Galilee. A 70 mile journey is not a little trek or just a day trip.

But fishing was a familiar activity for many of the disciples. More than a simple pastime, it was the trade of four of the twelve disciples before they met and followed Jesus - Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John. Jesus, in fact, saw them out fishing one day three years before and he called out to them in their fishing boats, saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people."

And so it is fitting that Jesus' last resurrection appearance in the gospel of John is back in the place where it all began for many of the disciples. Despite their previous experience in the trade, the disciples caught nothing all night.

We know how that feels don't we? Hoping that our familiar work or pastimes will take our mind off things - we can be frustrated when they aren't as productive or fruitful or lifegiving as we remembered them being.

Early in the morning, someone appears and calls from the shore, interrupting the disciples' fishing, saying, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" At this point, none of the disciples knew who it was yet. It could have been a hungry stranger, hoping to buy some breakfast. At the very least the shouting was not going to help them catch any. Then the person told them to switch the net on the right side of the boat and there were so many fish they could not haul the net back.

The huge catch of fish clued John into who the guy standing on the shore really was - Jesus. This story echoes a previous story of Jesus helping the disciples fish. And although it wasn't so many fish that their nets were breaking this time, it resembles the

miraculous catch that happened the day Jesus called them and Peter, Andrew, James, and John left everything and followed Jesus.

When John said “It is the Lord!” Peter jumped into the water to swim to Jesus, even ahead of the boat full of fish. And there was Jesus along with a fire and some bread, roasting some fish. They added more fish on the fire, and then Jesus said, “Come and have breakfast.”

I wonder what would have happened if the disciples had not responded to that stranger on the shore. If they had grumbled and mumbled at the interruption and at the impertinence of knowing more than they about fishing.. and not moved their nets to the other side.

Would they have missed seeing Jesus? Would they have missed breakfast? Would Jesus have shouted louder or made himself known another way.

This story invites us to pay attention to those moments of interruption. Maybe even those moments of irritation. They might mean we need to change direction, switch something up.

They may be trying to tell you something important. To teach you something. To offer you something - grace, a break, etc. They might be moments of gift. Yeah, that annoying pain in your shoulders or crick in your neck from hunching over a computer screen all day as you try to work from home - maybe the first time you feel that pain is an invitation to a 5-minute break to get up and walk. Or that kid that made a cameo appearance naked on your Zoom screaming, maybe you and that kid both need 15 minutes of undivided attention. Your low-grade headache that just won't go away, is saying maybe to move your body for 10 minutes and go outside to feel the sun or the breeze, or to listen to a creature move other than yourself, or to admire that wildflower that popped up in your yard.

Those moments of interruption, maybe they are holy interruptions, inviting you to cast your net on the other side of the boat for a bit, to change it up, to walk away from the screen, to turn off the news, to pay attention to something different and quite possibly see Jesus in the midst.

I have to say I could be biased about this story because it is one of my very favorite stories in scripture. It's got all of my favorite things. Breakfast - favorite meal of the day - check. Beach - a favorite place in nature - check. Fire - who doesn't love a campfire - it's heat and crackling sounds - check. And Jesus in the flesh cooking and serving inviting you to a meal - check, check, check.

This story is often paired with the conversation Jesus has with Peter afterwards. We're saving that one for next week. And yeah, that's a hard conversation, where Jesus asks Peter, do you love me, a million times, well, at least three. But, you know what's beautiful and wonderful and full of love and grace?

This story begins with Jesus simply caring for the disciples. Like a parent making Saturday morning waffles/pancakes for their beloved child.. Jesus is caring for their wellbeing.

Come and have breakfast. Let's not discuss life-altering things before a good meal.

When your body is going through difficult things - ie, when the world is facing a pandemic and nothing is as it was.. Maybe, make sure you sit down and eat breakfast, a healthy breakfast everyday. Maybe take a few moments to connect with someone else - if you live alone.. Make a call, in a way that you can see someone's face or at least hear their voice.

There's a parenting acronym for when toddlers are melting down over what seems like nothing to HALT - and check a few things. HALT - ask yourself - are they H-hungry, A-angry, L-lonely, and/or T-tired? And perhaps you can next time when things seem headed in a negative directive proactively address one of those needs.

I'm pretty sure Jesus is just proactively HALTING with Peter. Yes, Peter, we'll discuss these important things, like Peter do you love me later, after you've had a bite to eat. When you're not so frustrated over catching nothing, life being so weird and different and disappointing, and when you've had a chance to rest and replenish some of your body's energy source. So, come and eat!!

If you've flown in the last decade, you know that as part of the safety warnings they say if you are flying with a minor and the oxygen masks drop down from the ceiling, always put your own mask on first before helping someone else who needs help.

Put your own oxygen mask on first sometimes seems antithetical to the gospel of sacrifice yourself for others.

But if you want to be helping, serving, loving, caring for others for the long haul? You have to put your own oxygen on first. You have to eat breakfast. You literally won't be any good at taking care of others if you don't take care of yourself.

What I hear in the "come and have breakfast" is the antidote for hungry, angry, lonely, tired. Jesus says - come spend time with me, come eat, let your hope be restored, and energy replenished.

There are a few different daily checklists for taking care of yourself during a pandemic that have made their rounds on social media.

One of them is this:

- What am I grateful for today?
- Who am I checking in on or connecting with today?
- What expectations of normal am I letting go of today?
- How am I getting outside today?
- How am I moving my body today?
- What beauty am I either creating, cultivating, or inviting in today?

I've seen others as simple as:

- Shower
- Meds
- Water
- Clean one thing/space
- Tend something growing/living (plant/animal/child)
- Be mindfully present to (song/sound, feeling, see, spiritual practice)
- Reach out to a human outside your home
- One thing to get heart rate up
- One thing you'll be glad you did later
- One thing just because you want to
- One good laugh

Our bodies are important. They are the only bodies we get in this world. So how are you caring for yours?

Are you eating well? Too much? Healthy things? How are you sleeping? Are you taking your medication? Are you moving your body? Getting away from the screen?

Before we can change the world, or serve the world, (that's the story for next week) it starts here. With ourselves. Taking good care.

Are you hungry? Angry? Lonely? Tired?

Come and have breakfast. Sit for a while. Breathe. Enjoy some sabbath.