

May 1, 2022

John 21:1-14

“When You Know it is the Lord!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ and especially our Confirmands,

Fourteen days ago was Easter Sunday. The women found the tomb of Jesus empty. Two men in dazzling apparel stood by the women and said: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you? ... And they [the women] remembered his [Jesus’] words.”

You might recall that during the Easter message I asked a simple question: “Is there anything that can be more powerful or captivating than simply saying and taking to heart that he who was dead and buried is now alive and rules the universe? ... The eye witness testimony of the women should cause the whole world to stop and think hard about what is written - what happened - and what it ultimately means. The Defeat of Death!” The cross and the empty tomb are the good news of forgiveness, life, and salvation!

This had to be incredibly exciting for those who heard Jesus speak. It had to be amazing for those who saw him with their own eyes and who touched him with their own hands. We are told in Acts 1:3 that Jesus “presented himself alive to them [to the apostles] after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” What this meant for the apostles should also mean the same for us who believe their message. We are invited by the apostolic word to excitedly hear Jesus in the pages of Scripture. By the power and working of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to see Jesus through the eyes of an amazing, living faith. Jesus touches us in the sacrament of Baptism and we may touch him in the sacrament of his very body and blood. The apostle John writes that:

The life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete (1 John 1:2-4).

Complete joy for the apostles is when that same joy is found in us. We have fellowship with them and with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Do you know what that truly means? It means that we miraculously participate in the death of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead - dying to sin and rising unto newness of life! We are connected to him and thereby connected to one another. **When You Know it is the Lord** and embrace who he is and what he has done, there wells up in the heart a certain sense of urgency to be with him always until the end of the age. There is a proper fear that compels us to be in his presence, for we know that without him we are nothing and have nothing of the kingdom. Paradise is to be with Jesus and all that he has promised and will finally give. To have Jesus is our everything.

In our gospel lesson we see the urgency of Peter to be with Jesus. I believe that the weight of his denial of Christ on the night of the trial and before the crucifixion was what compelled him to leap out of the boat to be with him. Seven disciples had been fishing to no avail. Our lesson tells us:

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” He

said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When You Know it is the Lord you may very well find yourself leaping out of boats just to get to him like Peter did. On the other hand, the other disciples remained in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, but we shouldn’t make too much of this for they were also headed for Jesus. Perhaps the difference is the degree of urgency. None of them were indifferent to reaching the destination of Jesus. Like I said, I believe that Peter’s denial of Christ was weighing heavily upon him. Jesus will powerfully sooth his soul with forgiveness after they finish breakfast. The point is that they wanted to be with him. This is why we often must go through difficult times in the course of this life. It drives us to an urgency to be with Christ.

So, what does all of this mean for us as we consider this Sunday of Junior Confirmation? None of the apostles were indifferent to being in the presence of Jesus. Because of the joy that they had in his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead there was a sense of urgency to be and remain with him and not become lost. They wanted him in their lives. How about you this morning? Is this what you want or will you be one of those who will drift away from the gifts that you have received?

We are invited to always remain in the presence of Jesus. It isn’t like the incident in our gospel lesson where we may leap out of a boat to join him on the shore and have breakfast with him. And yet, we are to have an urgency when it comes to being with Jesus since he says, “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 16:25).” The truth is that what we have in the means of grace is just as good as Jesus on the shore. The difference is that we have him by faith. We have Jesus in the preaching of the word and in the living of our Baptisms whenever we confess our sins and receive forgiveness. We have Jesus in his very body and blood given and shed for us.

We have the eternal gospel treasures of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation offered and given to us in the means of grace. The means of grace are Jesus. This is how he is with us always until the end of the age. If you want him to abide in you so that you overcome death and hell then abide in his gospel and sacraments which you find at church. The gospel and the sacraments are where the Holy Spirit gives you Jesus with all that he has done for you that you may have forever life. Our lesson goes on to say:

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.”

Our breakfast with Jesus is whenever we hear the law and gospel preached in its truth and purity and whenever we receive the sacraments as they are instituted by Christ. Here Jesus is revealed to us. Here

Jesus remains with us. Here Jesus saves us. We eat in his presence in the Supper of our Lord. We hear his words in the preaching of the Bible. We still daily die and rise with him in our Baptisms. Sin is made utterly sinful and dies with Jesus so that we might be raised in his forgiveness and live in his love for us and, in turn, love one another. The question today is simply what's next for you **When You Know it is the Lord?**

Someone once said, "There's enough dust on some of your Bibles to write 'damnation' with your fingers." Will that be you in a short while - a dusty Bible and never at church? Luther once wrote:

When you get to the point of imagining that you know the Gospel, the Ten Commandments, and the Word of God outstandingly well, then you are lost, and the devil has won the game. Then people usually say: "Oh, I have heard that for a long time, tell me something different!" When the heart is tired of God's Word in this way, no longer regarding it as its greatest treasure, then the door is open in front and in back, and the devil has free access and may introduce all sorts of errors.

Damnation - Hell is not an exaggeration when we choose to divorce ourselves from the law and gospel and holy sacraments. If you come to that moment in life where you imagine that you know it all, and become sick and tired of the same old thing at church and Bible class, you can be rest assured that the devil will gladly provide new and exciting things for you that will take you down to the pit of forever darkness and fire. So, where will you be in the day of your death or when Jesus returns?

You may or may not know this but church tradition says that Peter was crucified upside down in Rome for his faith - because he knew the Lord. He could only face such a thing holding on to the cross and empty tomb. In your journey down here and in your hour of departure there isn't anything more important than knowing your Lord. My desire for you is the same desire of the writer to the Hebrews (6:11:12): "I desire for each one of you that you would show that you are sincere and have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish in this life, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises!" May you always know it is the Lord and remain with him forever!

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott