

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

John 21:1-19

Year C - Easter 3, Text: John 21:1-14 (15-19)
Year C - Easter 3, Text: John 21:1-19

Although John's Gospel probably ended initially at 20:31, chapter 21 describes the resources available to the post-resurrection community — the continuing presence of a Jesus who dines with His brothers and sisters and defines their mission and responsibilities. The fact that these shepherds and fishermen gather a huge haul of fish points to the fact that the Messianic Age has indeed broken in (see Ezekiel 47:1–12; note v. 9) and that success will crown their witness.

In this closing incident, the risen Lord feeds seven of His disciples with bread and fish, an act symbolizing His continuing presence among them and His bonding with them (e.g., His feeding them through the Eucharist). Three times Jesus asks Peter, who had denied Him three times, “Do you love me?” (21:15–17). He tells the disciples that some will have to experience martyrdom (21:18–19) and that His reappearing will not take place as soon as some might wish (21:20–23).

The following are some sermon comments on this story from Dr. Harry Wendt:

The grand finale John's Gospel comes in the final chapter (ch. 21). It happens up in Galilee. Late one afternoon, just before sunset, Peter says, “I'm going fishing.” Six other disciples say, “We'll go with you.” So out they go, about 100 yards from shore. They fish all night. They throw out the nets. They drag them in. Hour after hour — throughout the night! But they catch nothing. Frustrating!

Then God gets to work on the eastern sky. Deep blues become soft blues. Then a progression of other colors appears: red, orange, gold, and silver! The sea reflects the sky. While this is happening, the disciples see Someone on the shore. They don't know who it is. He calls out to them, “You haven't caught any fish, have you?” How did He know? They reply, “No!”

He calls out again, “Try the other side of the boat!” Use your imagination. You are a fisherman. You've

been fishing all night — on the left side of the boat. There are no fish there. Now Someone says, “Try the other side of the boat!” What would you have thought? However, the disciples try the other side of the boat. Immediately, their nets are full!

They now ask themselves, “Who is that Person on the beach? John drops to it first! “It is the Lord!” Peter jumps out of the boat, wraps some clothes around himself, and wades ashore. The others follow in the boat and beach it. They must now walk up to where Jesus is, look into His eyes, and wait for Him to speak.

They bring no fish with them. But they bring memories — of falling asleep, cowardice, and denials! And what does Jesus say this time? Ever so gently He says, “Come and have breakfast with Me.” Perhaps they wonder if He'll rebuke them this time. But He doesn't! Perhaps they are tempted to ask, “When are You going to rebuke us for what we did to You?” Had they done so, I think He'd have looked at His hands, smiled a little sadly, shaken His head — and said nothing. He merely asks them, “Do you love Me?” And when they insist that they do, He says, “Feed My lambs; feed My sheep; feed My sheep!”

This, then, is the One into whose face each of us must look. This, then, is the one to Whom we must turn for answers to any questions that we might have about life, death, and eternity!

We believers who gather here have something in common. We agree as to Who this Person was and is. We believe that He was and is God Himself. We share a common faith with regard to His Cross and Resurrection! On the cross, He dealt with our sins once and for all. In the resurrection, He put His and our death to death—for time and eternity.

We should feel as awestruck about that continuing Presence as the disciples felt in that Upper Room and on that Galilean shore! Although we are no more worthy to live in that Presence than were the disciples

of old, He looks at each one of us with a divine kindness and says, “Peace be with you! Come and have breakfast! Do you love me! Feed My lambs! Feed My sheep!”

Incredible, but true! When we finally understand that we live out life in Jesus’ presence, we cannot but feel overwhelmed! He reaches out His hand to take hold of our hand! And we know that He’ll never let it go! Our hearts feel so warm, so full! We just know we’re going to want to serve Him as much as possible! And eventually we get up and begin our walk out into the world with Him. We can feel His hand gripping ours. It all feels so good!

Sometimes it happens that when, after worship, we get to the church door, suddenly ... we can’t feel His hand or presence anymore. We think, “He’s gone!” We ask, “Jesus, where did you go to?” “Nowhere!” “I can’t see you! How can I serve you if I can’t see you?” “I’m still here. I’ve been with and around you all time. I always have been — I always will be. It’s just that I’m around you in disguise! I’m that hungry one, that thirsty one, that stranger, that person without clothing, that sick one, that prisoner. That’s Me — in disguise!”

And He continues: “In the world, greatness is measured by how many people you can get to serve you. In My Kingdom, greatness is measured by how many people you serve! I gave you life so that you could give it away to Me — through serving others. Even as I gave Mine away for you!” And the more we listen, the more we are overwhelmed and transformed!