

### **Psalm 30**

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed. To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication: "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!" You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

### **John 21:1-19**

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to 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 there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish 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, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where

you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

## Sermon

Denton, a dog trainer, went bankrupt. He was forced to find a different job to pay the bills until he was able to restart his dog raising business. As many would do, Denton found a job as a waiter in a small New Orleans diner. After working for a few days, Denton mentioned to the owner of the diner, “I’m turning out to be a pretty good waiter, don’t you think.” The proprietor replied, “If you don’t mind Denton, I would like to share a few suggestions about your work.” “Such as?” asked Denton. “Well,” said the owner, “when the customer refuses to eat his food, we don’t normally rub their nose in it.”

Food is an interesting thing. More than restaurants and meals, food is something we think about much more than three times a day. We are preoccupied with feasts and diets, what we will have for our next meal, what we had for our last meal. We are so preoccupied with food that it has become one of the most popular topics on social media, sharing images and reviews and recipes. And as Presbyterians, like most Christians, we are preoccupied with making sure that every ministry event includes a snack, breakfast, lunch. Don’t get me wrong, I love the signs of hospitality and friendship that we are able to share around tables at church. And there is the added benefit of knowing that if my sermon isn’t great, at least you will appreciate the wonderful desert at lunch.

Have you ever heard a church friend says these words? “I just don’t feel like I’m being fed at my church.” As a pastor, I have heard those words once or twice and I have talked to many of my colleagues who have had similar experiences. A parishioner who is trying to express the feeling of being in a spiritual rut, not growing, not feeling faith-full. I find that often this feeling reflects more than just what the pastor or church is or isn’t offering, that there are transitions and anxieties and challenges within a persons life that contribute to this sense of hunger, this longing for spiritual nourishment. But it is hard not to take things personally.

Jesus understood the spiritual practice of feeding and being fed. In today’s resurrection text, Jesus appears on the shoreline of the sea and what is he doing? He is making breakfast for the disciples who where out fishing. There is no practical reason that Jesus has to prepare breakfast, there was no expectation that someone would be waiting for the fishermen. The risen Lord could have appeared to the disciples and simply said hello, he could have simple pulled Peter aside and said, I forgive you. He could have told them to go out and tell others about the Good News of God’s love. But Jesus choose to be revealed in the breaking of bread, in the feeding and being fed.

Now I don’t know if this happened that morning, but I know this has happened at more than a few meals at my own house. I could imagine one of the disciples, one of those who were more along for the boat ride then actual fishermen, arriving at the shore and seeing what was cooking over the fire they might say, “Oh, fish. I don’t like fish. Wouldn’t it be nice if Jesus would have made eggs or waffles or bacon.” Ok, so they wouldn’t have asked for bacon, but

you get the idea. Just like there are many unique tastes for food, there are many unique wants for spiritual nourishment. Is there any wonder why there are so many different churches who provide many different experiences of faith. But what is clear is that Jesus doesn't try to provide a different meal for every disciple, he provides a meal and invites them to eat.

I wonder how often wished for the church to be a short-order diner, a place where we can choose through a vast menu and get just what we want, just the way we want it. But is that the example that Jesus gives, of a restaurant church that tries to provide everything to everybody? And at some level, the church is called to feed those who come and at some level the church is something more than something to consume, something to entertain us. Is there room for a meal that we may not like, but if we eat it we will find greater health and strength? "I don't feel like I'm being fed at church?" Has the church stopped providing spiritual food, or is the food that is offered just not to our taste?

I like what Jesus does when the disciples arrive on the beach. Instead of just offering the food that he has prepared, he tells the disciples, "Come and can you bring some of the fish that you have?" All of a sudden there is a shift, no longer is this just a meal that someone else provides for our nourishment. Now the meal has become a shared responsibility. It is the pitch-in model of spiritual nourishment. Bring a dish to share so that we all might eat. Come and bring your gifts, your time and talents, your energy and wisdom, and set it on the table that Jesus has prepared so that we all might be nourished. God has given us, has blessed us with gifts to offer so that we might feed ourselves and others who come to the table. So what do you bring, what do you have to offer to the master chef, how are you participating in the meal that Christ provides?

The third piece is then what happens after the meal. Jesus pulls Simon Peter aside, and he asks, "Do you love me?" Three times, he asks if he loves him, and in doing so we hear Jesus forgiveness and we hear what it means to love Jesus. "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep." Church is more than a place to feed the righteous, those that attend. Church is also a place where those who are called in are also sent out. If all we do is worry about feeding those who come through our doors, then we miss the calling of Jesus on the shore. If all we do is worry about how we might feed ourselves, then we miss what it means to state our love for the risen Lord. No, the church has to be more than a restaurant or meal for those who gather. It must become a cooking class that prepares those who have tasted Christ's love, to go and feed those who have not or cannot come on their own.

There is still a world of spiritually hungry people in the world, desperate for a sign of hope, of belonging, of love. It is up to us, the church, to feed his sheep and tend his lambs. Thanks be to God for feeding us at this table, and calling us to feed the hungry of heart in this world.  
Amen