

“Get Educated”

John 21:1-14

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

In last week’s Gospel lesson, we read about the first two times that Jesus appeared to the apostles. The first time when Thomas was not present, and the second time to show doubting Thomas the wounds in His hands, feet, and side.

This week, we read of the third appearance of Christ. The disciples were most likely overjoyed at having seen their Lord risen from the dead, but they still did not understand what they were supposed to do now. They had left Jerusalem and had gone back to Galilee. Faced with the bewildering events of Christ’s death and resurrection, Peter and the boys go back to that which is familiar to them. They went fishing.

Just like at the beginning of Christ’s ministry, Peter, James, and John are out fishing all night on the Sea of Galilee without catching anything. Then along comes somewhat of a stranger who tells them to drop the nets one more time and they pull in a great catch of fish.

The first time this happened, as recorded in Luke chapter 5, when Jesus was first calling these men to be apostles, Jesus blesses them

with an act of grace and gives them a great catch of fish. Peter turns this grace into law, falls to his knees and says, “Depart from me, Lord; for I am a sinful man.” He believed that in his sinful state, he should not be near to God or anyone godly – as if faith or being justified in God’s sight had anything to do with Peter’s words or his works. Peter needed to get educated.

This time when Jesus causes this great catch of fish, Jesus first greets them with words that are anything but gracious. He says, “Children (paidia), do you have any fish?” That word for children (paidia) is a weighted word. It is a child at the age of being educated or needing to be educated. Or can be a term used against adults who need to put away childish things.

The verb (paideuw) means “to educate,” but not always “book learning.” Pontius Pilate, finding no fault in Jesus and not wanting to crucify Him says to the crowd, “I will (paideuw/educate) Him and release Him.” And Jesus got educated again and again by the Roman guards. And then was crucified. (In my youth, I remember getting “educated” a few times.)

The disciples need to get educated. And Jesus chastises them with this greeting. But His presence there is not a message of Law and condemnation. The risen Christ is the Gospel. Peter still sees himself as a sinful man (especially following his three denials of Christ), but this time Peter does not desire for the Lord to leave. He recognizes that it is

precisely because he is a sinful man that he needs to be near to God. He needs the Gospel. He needs to be with Christ.

As we focused on last week, and I say “we” even though I was not here, those same lessons were read at St. Paul in Pana where the Edens were worshiping. As we saw with Thomas, God is a God of forgiveness. Christ came to provide the means to salvation. He is salvation. He is the Gospel. In the three-plus years that Peter had known Jesus, it took him that entire time to understand his relationship with the man he called “Teacher.”

Even following Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to the disciples, confusion, bewilderment, and questions of what to do next still reigned supreme in the hearts and minds of these men. They needed to get educated – in a good way. They didn’t understand what Jesus had done because they still didn’t understand Moses and the prophets. The Old Testament was for them a closed book. To use an image from John’s Revelation: The seal on the scroll had yet to be broken [Rev. 5:9].

But the pain of the disciple’s confusion and education would soon be relieved. Luke records in his gospel that, during Christ’s final appearance to the disciples, before His ascension into heaven, the Lord “opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” [Lk. 24:45]. He told them again what the Old Testament had said about Him and how it was fulfilled, and this

time, through the mercy of God, their minds were opened to understanding and they believed. They got educated.

As John records in today's Gospel reading, Peter is no longer that same man who said: "Depart from me, Lord; for I am a sinful man." However, he is still that same man who saw Jesus walking on the water and, even though Christ had announced who He was, Peter still thought He might be a ghost. "If it is You Lord, tell me to come to you on the water."

Peter witnessed numerous healings and miracles. He heard the mute speak, the deaf hear; he saw the lame walk, the dead being raised. He walked on water (at least for a little while). He saw Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. He took part in not one, but two miraculous catches of fish. He saw the resurrected Christ with his own eyes. But all of this only left him dazed and confused. Peter became a changed man only when God's Word was opened to him.

We need to learn from the mistakes of the past. Do not think that miracles of healing and splendor need occur in your life for you to understand the reality, goodness, and mercy of God? God's interaction in our lives is an open book – and that book is the Holy Bible. If God and the Bible are confusing or bewildering to you, it's probably because you aren't really sure what is in it. You need to

get educated – in a good way.

We all know a few choice passages: John 3:16; Psalm 23; our confirmation verse. But such minimal knowledge of God does not even qualify as the tip of the iceberg. There will be many caught on the Last Day in the confused state of the disciples who knew that the man standing before them was Jesus Christ, but they still wanted to ask Him, “Who are you?”

Because, unfortunately, as Jesus says, on that Last Day, our Lord is going to relay that same sentiment and say to a multitude of people, “I do not know you or where you come from. Away from Me you evildoers.” There are many who will get educated that day – and for all eternity.

We have been given the most amazing opportunity. We are able to easily and quickly do that which wise men and philosophers have been struggling in vain to do for thousands of years. We are able to know God. We are able hear His words as He speaks to us. Holy Scripture was written for our learning. The knowledge of God is an open book. Never again should a disciple of the Lord stand in bewilderment before Christ questioning in his mind: “Who are you?” Open a Bible. Christ is found on every page. Be certain of what you believe.

As I have quoted many times, Luther said, “You can cut the

Bible on any page and it will bleed the blood of Christ.” Lutherans have been called a people of three books: The Bible, the hymnal, and the catechism. The hymnal and the catechism are excellent commentary on God’s Word and help in our understanding. They help to open our minds to Scripture. They help us to be certain of what we believe.

But it is the Bible, the very Word of God, which brings us that good news of great joy, and allows us to recognize and know the Gospel. The risen Christ who comes to us in flesh and blood is the Gospel. And we are bold to proclaim with certainty: Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!! Amen.