**John 21:1-19 May 1, 2022**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, John chapter 21 here re-reading these words. “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 here and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is remarkable how the same thing can be interpreted in many different ways. I remember seeing a video once of a very talented musician, who took the notes from the song “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and, even though he sang the same words and played the same notes every time, he played that song a different way over and over again to showcase various and very different styles of music. The same thing interpreted in a different way. It’s true in music, it’s true in food, where the same ingredients can be combined in different ways and with different spices to completely change dishes in different parts of the world and in different cultures. Art itself can be seen and interpreted in many different ways even though it’s the same picture, especially abstract art where it elicits different emotions in the people who view it, buy it, and display it. But to go back to the first example, while the song “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” was played in so many different ways, did it change the overall message of the song? “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” is not a very deep song, it doesn’t have a lot of meaning, it’s a nursery rhyme, it’s supposed to be simple to sing and understand, it doesn’t have a ton of words because it’s for children, young children, babies even. To try to dive into some sort of hidden meaning to such a simple song would be silliness, no matter how it’s played. The message is simple, the style is what changes.

If you look at the difference between the Second Reading in Revelation 5 and our Gospel reading from John chapter 21 you will see a drastic change of style. Just to give you an example of this, I will re-read some words from Revelation 5, “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the Elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns, and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.” Now compare that briefly to the words of our Gospel lesson from John chapter 21, “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…….and later on in the Gospel reading, Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.” Do you see any difference here? Obviously there is a drastic difference in terms of style of writing and you may even be tempted to think that the overall message of the two Scripture passages is drastically different. But if you think that you’d really in many ways be wrong. The style is different, this is true, and it’s pretty blatantly obvious. Revelation 5, if you interpret it literally is a glorious vision of a lamb with 7 horns and 7 eyes somehow walking over and picking up a scroll. Compare that to our Gospel lesson which seems rather…boring in comparison. Commonplace, not so different from perhaps your own life living so close to a Lake. Peter wants to go fishing, some guys go with him. Later on they meet up with their friend Jesus who has made them breakfast. One paints a glorious and epic picture, the other an ordinary one. Very different styles, but in many ways, as hard as it may be to see, the same core message.

Remember, you can say the same thing, just in different ways, and the Bible is full of many different styles of writing. Poetry, historical narratives, figurative and illustrative language, apocalyptic language. It’s easiest to take a book like one of the Gospels and follow it through, it’s a familiar story that is focused on the life and ministry of Jesus. You follow through Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and you are always hearing about Jesus. Compare that to a book like we are looking at in Bible Class: “Song of Songs.” This the greatest of the Songs of love that Solomon wrote to the Shuulamite woman, but it’s not only a song of love it also is interpreted Christologically because it speaks of Christ and his relationship to us, the bride of Christ, the church. So there is a deeper meaning outside of just a love song between two people. But that’s really the main comparison, if you can peel back the layer just a tiny bit you can understand that application or make that connection theologically, it’s just not explicitly there. Now compare it to what you’re hearing about in the book of Revelation. Apocalyptic or really what is called eschatological literature that is very deep and illustrative of the end times using poetic imagery that may be completely and totally over our heads. Are we talking about a literal lamb with 7 horns and 7 eyes? Is that what we will see in heaven? A lamb with wool and all of these features? No. But if you just pick up the book without any previous understanding of the power of Jesus Christ, and his description as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, or the understanding of horn being in reference to power and eyes being in reference to knowledge and also presence, therefore interpreting that this Lamb who was slain is the all powerful or omnipotent God and the omniscient or all knowing God or omnipresent or all present or seeing God, then you won’t get it, you’ll be lost. It’s not all that different than listening to a very complex style of music, like jazz music. Go home tonight and if you’ve never listened to jazz before, look up a song on the internet, or turn on a jazz radio station. Try for just a moment to follow a jazz song like you would a classic rock song, or a pop song. The styles are drastically different, and if you don’t know what to listen for it all sounds like garbled noise.

When we don’t get it, we ignore it, which is fine for jazz music, abstract art, different styles of food from other cultures. You may not get all there is to get out of it, but you are the only one who suffers in that case, you are depriving yourself of these things, someone could say that you don’t know what you are missing, but that’s fine with you, you can’t get over the hurdle or the entry knowledge that it would take to enjoy them and you go on with your life. But the problem is we can take those same barriers of not understanding it right away and apply it the words of Holy Scripture. And not grow at all, not gain a greater and deeper understanding of all that God is saying in the Bible, the inspired Word of God that has been given to us. There is a rich and deep meaning behind the imagery of the book of Revelation and the picture of salvation that we find in chapter 5, that you heard about this morning. There is a deeper understanding of the miraculous catching of fish in our Gospel lesson from John chapter 21, and I haven’t even scratched the surface of our First Reading from Acts chapter 9, or our Introit for today. I haven’t touched on the words of any of the particular hymns that we have sung or will sing. To come to God’s house to hear the Word of God isn’t a small snack, a packed lunch of one thing, it’s a beautiful, overflowing buffet of God’s Word in many and various forms and styles so that when you hear it you can see how vast and deep it is and how it has been provided for you.

But to our own detriment, so many of us walk into the buffet of God’s house, the feast that is laid before us, take a small plate, take something easy to eat like….jello or pudding or a banana. Get a glass of water. Sit down quietly in the corner, consume it as fast as we possibly can, and hurry out the door. There is more here than that for you to enjoy, but that’s it. Just enough to survive. It’s reflected in questions like, “Well….how many times do I have to go to church in order to be a member there, or in order to vote at voter’s meetings?” How many times do I “have to”? It may as well be written on my tombstone when I die because of how much I repeat it in Confirmation Class, or Bible Class, or just here in my preaching, but the saying that reflects your life in the church is that everything you enjoy here from the hand of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is not a have to, it is a get to. But we see it as an obligation, like eating so that we survive. If all you want to do is survive, then you don’t go to a buffet, you get a bag of rice and ration it out, you eat a flavorless meal in order to consume enough so that you don’t starve. But if you’re at the buffet, the feast, you eat. Especially when the bill is paid for, and you didn’t have to make any of the food, and you don’t have to clean up any of the food, and you don’t have to do anything but sit down, and enjoy.

The core message of what we’re talking about in our Readings today was in one of the hymns we sang on Easter, did you catch it? It was actually pointing forward to the picture we see in Revelation 5. “At the Lamb’s High Feast we sing” When you go to the Lamb’s High Feast you don’t have to bring a dish. He provides it. And it’s greater than you can imagine. See how it compares to the picture of our Gospel lesson, in a very trimmed down, easy to digest, “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” picture, an easy style of writing and understood as a historical narrative meaning it happened just as it was written, what’s the overall message? A deep theological understanding of the fish, and the cloak that Peter puts on and how it connects to the boat, or the charcoal fire how the coal is like the coal that was placed on the tongue of Isaiah, and the bread how the bread has to be speaking in a sacramental sense to the Lord’s Supper, but…well..then you have to wrestle with the fish and that there’s no wine and…and….no. Set all the deep stuff aside. What’s the message? A bunch of guys go fishing, they can’t catch anything. Jesus comes. He provides the fish. He gives the catch. He makes the fire. He makes the breakfast. He invites them to eat. Jesus serves. Jesus gives. It’s no different than the feast of Revelation, Jesus does the giving, you do the receiving. It’s the same for the disciples, it’s the same for you. He gives his life to save you from your sin, he rises again to give you eternal life. There is so much more for us to see in many different places throughout God’s Word how that reality is explained and illustrated in beautiful and amazing ways that we have never even begun to imagine, that’s the feast that is provided for you, that lays sprawled out in front of you here in God’s house. But it’s the same message, just in different styles, portrayed in different ways.

Jesus for you, your faith found in Christ Alone, it’s all there, even with Paul on the road, with the Lamb on the throne, with the Man sitting on the shore preparing breakfast for his friends. It’s all there, in different ways, but all for you.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.