

DAILY LIFE

A Message by the Rev. Joyce L. J. Lawson

1 Peter 3:13-18a
John 21:1-14

April 19, 2026

It's been two weeks since we gathered on Easter Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But today, little evidence remains of that glorious day that is the pinnacle celebration of our Christian faith. There are still white paraments which will be the case up until Pentecost, but the white cloth on the altar is less colorful and celebratory than the one used the past couple of weeks. The Easter flowers are all gone and the last blooming flower of the last remaining lily plant in this church turned brown and shriveled up this past week. And perhaps the most obvious difference between today and Easter Sunday is that there are noticeably fewer people attending worship.

I think it is safe to say that we are back to life as usual. This reality of life settling back into a more typical pace with familiar activities is also what happened with Jesus' first disciples. Sometime after Jesus' resurrection but before his Ascension to heaven forty days later, Peter, who we know was a fisherman by trade, said to the other disciples who were with him at the time, "*I am going fishing.*" Apparently, the others thought it sounded like a good idea, so they said, "*We'll go with you.*" We are then told that "*They went out and got into the boat...*" (John 21:3). At that point they set out on the Sea of Galilee for a night of fishing.

After the emotional roller coaster of Jesus' last week of life, his extremely cruel death on a cross, and then the experience of shock, fear but also joy following his resurrection, I think the disciples were not exactly sure what to think and do next. Jesus was alive and that was wonderful, and yet it was also clear that following Jesus was not going to be the same as it used to be. They were waiting for the Holy Spirit and uncertain as to their next steps. In some ways it may seem odd that they would simply return to their former daily activity of fishing after the life-altering events of Jesus' death and resurrection. But then again, we humans often return to that which is familiar when in a state of emotional overload.

When you and I feel overwhelmed it is not at all unusual for us to seek comfort in familiar places and by engaging in familiar activities. Some might take refuge in the solitary labor of gardening, long walks along a familiar path, or even in frantic cleaning and organizing. Others reach for chocolate or some other comfort food. Some go shopping and get caught up in the distraction of buying, others choose to bury themselves in work, and some find an escape by losing themselves in the monotony of watching one television show after another. And unfortunately, there are those who return to old addictions like alcohol, drugs, or gambling. We humans often find comfort in familiar settings, as well as familiar activities and behaviors when feeling overloaded by emotional, stressful, life-altering events.

Certainly, Jesus' resurrection was a huge, life-altering, history impacting event, but what we see in today's passage are the disciples returning to the ordinary, familiar activity of fishing. For many of us, our daily life is often understood as ordinary, sometimes monotonous, but in all reality, it can also be busy and even chaotic. Jesus is alive, raised from the dead, and yet we slip right back into our same old daily routine of work, school, picking up children, babysitting grandchildren, going to the grocery store, doctor appointments and any number of other regular activities. Much of our lives are caught up in these daily activities, and yet we tend to experience a certain amount of comfort and satisfaction in the routine of our daily activities.

But look, there is Jesus on the shore, waving as though he is trying to get our attention amidst our daily life. There were no angels, flashing white lights or shaking ground for those fishing disciples, Jesus simply showed up after a night of unsuccessful fishing. Apparently, he not only showed up for breakfast, he also made breakfast. When Jesus shows up, we often think it's going to be like the Mount of Transfiguration or Easter Sunday. We think something spectacular, adrenaline-pumping should happen when Jesus comes to us. But not so! The Gospel stories recount story after story of Jesus showing up in the villages, towns and homes of everyday people. It was amidst the everyday, ordinary lives of people that he taught, healed and called them to follow him. But then Jesus died and was resurrected, and that whole week was very dramatic. Then after the dramatic happenings of crucifixion and resurrection, our gospel lesson reminds us that Jesus likes to show up in the most ordinary places and circumstances of our daily lives. This coming to us amidst our daily life is a good thing, and yet the distractions of our daily living can easily cause us to overlook Jesus' presence.

It's also true that there are those who are only impressed by that which is extraordinary. Such individuals are constantly seeking stand-out distractions and high-intensity thrills that take them beyond what many consider to be ordinary life. Psychologists talk about these type T personalities as those who are caught up in the idea that only a non-ordinary, thrilling life is a life that is worth living. This need for a big, exciting, and intense life can spill over into our Christian life. After all, it makes sense that if much of life is routine and common, then God who is the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of life must be in that other small percentage of life. If God is God, and God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving then something dramatic, something extraordinary should always happen when God shows up. Therefore, those type of moments are the only times we really need to be attentive to God's presence.

And certainly, God can come into our lives by way of fire and smoke, angels and open tombs. In the Bible, there are quite a few dramatic stories that reflect what can happen when God shows up. There are also people throughout history as well as today who have very powerful stories that tell of their personal encounters with the living God. But if we look for God, expect God only to show up at intense, mountaintop occasions, then we will likely miss our Lord's presence in the many daily, ordinary occasions that make up the majority of our life.

Perhaps we can understand why those fishing disciples did not at first recognize Jesus when he called to them from the shore. After all, they weren't looking for him there; they weren't expecting him to show up there. It was one thing for Jesus to show up in the beautiful Garden of Gethsemane or in the Upper Room where they had been afraid and praying, but they were not expecting him to show up while they were working, relaxing, spending time with friends... Perhaps there are times and places we don't want Jesus to show up because we don't want him to hear what we are saying or see what we are doing. Perhaps we don't want Jesus to interrupt our enjoyable, relaxing time with a task to accomplish or a person who needs our help.

Yes, there can be great comfort in old, familiar routines and practices, but the disciples' decision to return to their former life and trade shows us that there is no getting away from the reality of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Wherever the disciples go, the Lord will be with them. Wherever we go, the Lord will be with us. This, of course, means that not even our ordinary daily routine is going to be the same. As the psalmist asks so poignantly, "*Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?*" (Psalm 139:7). Even as the disciples retreated to the familiar activity of fishing, and even as we retreat to the office, the garden, the park or video games, what they and we ultimately discover is that Jesus is there. Jesus is there to teach us, comfort us, serve and nourish us. He is also there to challenge us and send us on our way to serve in his name.

When the disciples decided to go out on the Sea of Galilee for a night of fishing, I think they thought of it as a break from the stress and uncertainty of their disciple responsibilities. But instead of experiencing a successful, invigorating night of fishing, theirs was one of frustration and failure. Let's face it, our daily lives are sometimes filled with more than a few frustrations and discouragements. But then the light of dawn rises, and Jesus is on the shore. Jesus is concerned about those He loves and he is ready with instructions on how they can transform their failure into success. And even though they didn't seem to know who he was when they first saw him, they followed his advice just like they had done three years earlier when Jesus first appeared to them on the shore of that same Sea after a night of failing to catch fish.

It's because of Jesus that a discouraging night turned into a joyous dawn of fishing success. I think it's very telling that in the Gospel stories and despite their fishing expertise, the disciples never catch any fish unless Jesus is present. It is Jesus' presence in the disciples lives that makes their fishing productive. It is Jesus' presence that makes our daily lives fruitful and productive.

So, for a moment, let's consider the typical course of our daily lives. Often our typical day involves a routine, a familiar flow, and activities that might even be described as mundane. These typical days make up a majority of our life. If God is going to be known on earth as God is known in heaven, it will be because followers of Jesus Christ have learned to live the way of love and joy, righteousness and peace not just in church and at Christian events, but daily as we work, attend school, shop at stores, drive on the roads, do household chores, enjoy time with friends, go on vacations, and do whatever else we do and go

wherever else we go in the course of a day or a lifetime of days. The resurrected Jesus on the shore calling out to his disciples while they are fishing tells us that God comes to us in our ordinary daily living. In fact, our most productive encounters and opportunities are when Jesus meets us, walks with us, and instructs us throughout the course of our daily life.

Why? Because that is where we spend most of our time! The measure of our lives is not dependent on the one or four or eight intense and highly memorable encounters we've had with the Living God although such encounters do make for memorable stories. The measure of our lives is not about the one or two mission trips we've gone on or the occasional ministry opportunity we have participated in, although participation in such activities typically does have a blessed impact on us as well as others. The big picture measure of our lives is about our daily walk with the Risen Christ, and whether our daily walk is drawing us closer to Jesus and positively impacting the lives of others.

So, how would you describe your relationship with the Lord in the not so exciting and yet sometimes busy and frustrating moments of your daily life? Are you even noticing Jesus' presence during the unfolding of your many ordinary days? If you do not typically take note of Jesus' presence during the unfolding of your daily life, what does that say? Clearly, it is amidst daily life that the rubber of our shoes most often has the opportunity to meet the road of faithful living.

The reality of our daily lives reveals that we don't regularly stand at the entrance of an empty tomb with glowing angels speaking to us like they spoke to Mary Magdalene, and we rarely get knocked down by a blinding light on the road to Damascus like the Apostle Paul. Instead, our daily encounters with the Christ tend to be much more subtle and common. Certainly, those adrenaline-pumping moments occasionally happen, but it's so important to remember that Jesus is also present in the other 80 to 90 or even 99% of our life that we treat so indifferently much of the time.

So today, it is back to life as usual. But perhaps amidst your daily fishing, your daily working, running errands, eating, cleaning, studying, and playing, you remind yourself to look up so that you may see the One who is close by and calling to you. You may not have expected Jesus to show up amidst your typical daily life activities, but he does and he likely has something to say about what you are doing and what you should be doing. So, every moment of every day may our Risen Lord find you and me paying attention, ready to acknowledge his presence and prepared to follow his instructions! Amen.