

**+ John 21:1-14 + The Resurrection Life: Restored—Not Rejected +
+ 3rd Sunday of Easter + 19 April 2015 +**

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“Come and have breakfast.” Have you ever had one of those moments when you didn’t know how to respond? You know, one of those moments where you’re so surprised that you don’t know if you should be happy or hesitant. You try to wrap your mind around what you’re seeing and hearing—and you just don’t know what to say or what to do. On that sun-kissed beach along the Sea of Galilee, that’s exactly how the 7 of us felt.

All Jesus said with a beckoning wave of his hand was **“Come and have breakfast.”** All we could think of was, “How do you respond when someone who should be dead, someone whom you abandoned invites you to breakfast?” There wasn’t much time to think after we landed on that beach with a net full of large fish caught just minutes before. John counted up the fish—153! Fish were roasting nicely over the burning coals of a hot fire on the beach—and all Jesus said was **“Come and have breakfast!”**

How do you respond to that? Normally, you’d just go and eat. Food is prepared. The meal is ready. So dig in! It was just fish and bread roasted over a fire, but this was no ordinary breakfast. In fact, it was a meal that none of us would ever forget for the rest of our lives—a breakfast that the Holy Spirit would lead our fellow disciple John to later record in his Gospel about a morning where we learned how we were restored and not rejected.

I hate to admit this, but none of us knew how to respond because we all knew how we had treated the Lord. A couple weeks earlier we had celebrated the Passover with Jesus in a borrowed room in Jerusalem. How foolish we were! We actually argued over who of us should be considered the greatest in the Lord’s kingdom. It was a silly argument that went on and on until Jesus took off his outer garment, wrapped a towel around his waist, and knelt down with a basin of water to wash our dirty feet. Then the meal started, and Jesus spoke of how one of us would betray him. What’s really sad is that in our heart of hearts each of us knew we were capable of doing it. Later that night we found out it was Judas, who had followed Jesus with us for the last three years, but loved money more.

That night Jesus did something new, giving us his body and blood with bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, but none of us understood what was happening. Then he told us we would all fall away from him scattered like a flock of sheep. Every one of us protested, “I would rather die with you, Lord!” Yet every one of us abandoned him later that night in Gethsemane.

When Judas betrayed Jesus to his enemies, we all took off and went into hiding. Oh, a couple of our friends followed Jesus, but it didn’t take long before Simon Peter was hiding with us, weeping bitterly because he had denied the Lord three times. Only the faithful women and John dared to go out to Golgotha where they crucified our Teacher. He suffered greatly for a few hours before dying a humiliating death. None of us even dared to help take his body down from the cross. Only Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea stepped up, prepared his body, and placed it in Joseph’s tomb.

What were we doing that whole time and in the days that followed? We hid. We wept. We were scared and our minds kept replaying how we had rejected the Lord. Every one of us had done such awful things to Jesus. He had loved us so much and taught us and cared for us and was so patient with us. We even thought he was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and what did we do? We abandoned him. We denied him. We betrayed him. We left him to die not even having the guts to bury him. Can you see why it was so hard to respond when Jesus invited us to breakfast?

...But that’s just it. Sunday morning came—and what a strange day that was! We had been hiding for a couple days. Would the Jews be coming for us too? A couple faithful women made plans to finish preparing Jesus’ body no matter how bad the smell. Cleopas and another disciple decided it would be best to get out of Jerusalem and head back home to Emmaus. Thomas left for some forgotten reason. The rest of us didn’t know what to do—and then we heard a very rapid knock on our very locked door.

When the door was opened, Mary Magdalene couldn’t speak fast enough as tears rolled down her cheeks. **“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him.”** (John 20:2) Peter and John ran to the tomb to see it for themselves. Mary Magdalene followed them. While they were away, the other women came back, “The Lord’s alive! We have seen him just as an angel had told us. You are to go to Galilee where he will meet you!” Foolishly, none of us believed them. We thought it was nonsense. Peter and John came back to report that the tomb was indeed empty, but then Mary Magdalene came rushing

back, ***“I have seen the Lord!”*** She told us how Jesus had told her to tell his ***“brothers,” “I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”*** (John 20:17-18)

How do you respond to all that? We didn't know what to do. So we kept hiding in fear. Later that day, the Lord appeared to Simon Peter. Then Cleopas and that other disciple came back beating on the door and completely out of breath. ***“We have seen the Lord! He walked with us and broke bread with us!”*** Then Jesus appeared among us. He was really alive—and he didn't lash out at us or punish us as we so rightly deserved. He told us, ***“Peace be with you!”*** (John 20:19) and showed us the nail and spear marks on his body. He even ate some fish, but not all of us were there. Thomas, whom we called “The Twin,” came back after Jesus had appeared and convinced us that Jesus really wasn't alive. Our new joy disappeared with old guilt.

So we did what made sense. We locked the doors and hid for the next week. What a depressing week it was! Thankfully, Jesus appeared once again very much alive, very much in the flesh and again he told us ***“Peace be with you.”*** He let Thomas see his hands and feet and side. Amazingly, he didn't condemn Thomas as strongly as we all deserved, but instead he said, ***“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*** (John 20:26, 28)

Now Jesus had told us to meet him up in Galilee. About seven of us were able to go there. I don't recall why the other four weren't there. We waited for Jesus to appear to us again as he had promised. So we waited and waited and waited until Simon Peter said, ***“I'm going out to fish.”*** Not a bad idea! Why not? It's what most of us used to do or at least knew how to do. So we went and we fished and fished and fished all night long catching nothing.

We were about 100 yards from the shore as the first light of dawn came over the hills. Having caught nothing during the night, we were just going to go back to shore. We were exhausted. Just then a man on the shore called out to us, ***“Children, do you have any fish?”*** (ESV) Now the man wasn't insulting us, but he spoke as if he knew us intimately, as if he were our father or teacher.

We couldn't tell who it was. We were all wondering, “Who is this guy that he would talk to us like that?” So I responded, ***“No.”*** Then the man gave us some instructions, ***“Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”*** We had spent all night catching nothing, so we figured, “Why not once more?” Like that, the net immediately filled with so many fish that we couldn't haul it in. At that moment, John said to Peter, ***“It is the Lord!”*** Peter responded like you would expect. He wrapped his outer garment around himself and dove into the water, leaving us to haul in all those fish.

When we landed, Simon Peter climbed aboard and helped us bring in the net full of 153 large fish. Amazingly, the net never tore. ***“Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”*** Funny that Jesus told us to do that since he already had fish roasting over a warm fire. Then he told us, ***“Come and have breakfast.”*** Everything we had done, everything we had failed to do, everything that should've caused Jesus to reject us forever ran through our minds at that moment, but there was the Lord graciously giving us a breakfast of bread and fish. No one dared ask, ***“Who are you?”*** We knew it was the Lord. In his amazing, unconditional love, he was welcoming us back as his brothers and as his children. It was the best breakfast ever.

If you look back on your life, as we did, I'm quite confident that you will vividly remember those times when you rejected Jesus, when you abandoned him, when you failed to come through for him, when you betrayed or denied him. Every follower of Jesus has done that. Every human being has done that because every one of us is a sinful human being who deserves his rejection.

You don't deserve his love or his mercy or his gracious blessing any more than we did. You don't deserve to be called his child or his brother or his sister. Neither did we. How would you respond if you were in our sandals and Jesus showed up behind closed doors in your home or here in your church? I'm quite sure that that lifetime of rejection and abandonment and failure and guilt would rush through your mind as it did through ours.

...But as he did with us, the Jesus you would see would not treat you as your rejection and guilt deserve. He would not reject you. No, he would tell you, “Come and enjoy the feast I have for you—the feast of my Word, my Gospel that brings life to your soul, that brings healing to your pain, that brings forgiveness to your guilt, that brings restoration to your rejection, that brings heaven to your hell. Come and eat at the feast that costs you nothing, but cost me everything. Come and enjoy what only I can give you.”

Today I also see that the Lord is inviting you to his Table where he gives you the richest of fare—his own body with the bread and his own blood with the wine, and for what? For the full and free forgiveness of all your

sins—unasked, unforced, unearned. For the strengthening of your faith made so weak by all those times when you were like us and failed Jesus, and for the assurance that he has saved your soul for all eternity. There in that feast at the Lord's Table Jesus gives you more than breakfast. He gives you restoration. He renews you and restores you to being his child once again.

“Come and have breakfast.” My life was never the same again. The Lord's resurrection left me restored—not rejected by the Lord who came to save me and save you. In his mercy, he does not reject you, but has restored you too. **Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!** Alleluia! Amen.