

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Tempe, Arizona
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Sermon by Pastor Christopher Pflughoeft
The Resurrected Lord gives clarity.

¹After this, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how he showed himself: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I'm going fishing." They replied, "We'll go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴Early in the morning, Jesus was standing on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus called to them, "Boys, don't you have any fish?" "No!" they answered. ⁶He told them, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." So they cast the net out. Then they were not able to haul it in because of the large number of fish. ⁷The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard, "It is the Lord!" he tied his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the little boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about one hundred yards. ⁹When they stepped out on land, they saw some bread and a charcoal fire with fish on it. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter climbed aboard and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, 153 of them. Yet even with so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come, eat breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them, and also the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. – John 21:1-14 EHV

The restless farm boy Luke Skywalker was tasked with cleaning up the new bots, R2-D2 and C-3PO, which his uncle Ben purchased from some Jawas, scavenger traders. In following through with this task, Luke discovers a hologram message recorded on R2-D2 from Princess Leia, saying, "Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope." This message strikes Luke as strange, as he doesn't know a man by that name, only an old hermit named Ben Kenobi.

That night, R2-D2 escapes to find Obi-Wan. When this happened, Luke and C-3PO set out on a mission to find R2-D2. Unfortunately, they were then attacked by Tuscan Raiders. After being knocked unconscious, Obi-Wan shows up to save Luke.

Back at Luke's home, Obi-Wan reveals the information to Luke regarding who his father was and his true identity. Luke was to be a Jedi.

Luke had a lot to weigh about his future, but the Empire's brash actions in destroying his home and killing his aunt and uncle made the decision clear for him. This once restless farm boy had clarity, he would be a Jedi.

Why am I talking about Star Wars? Well, other than the fact that today, "May the Fourth" is known to many as Star Wars Day, "May the Fourth be with you." The clarity of the future and purpose given to Luke is similar to what we see in the gospel for today for the disciples.

Post crucifixion and resurrection, the disciples may have had some questions about the future. The Resurrected Lord's words and actions would give them clarity here. This is true for those who see Jesus by faith as well. The Resurrected Lord gives clarity.

Today's reading takes place on at least the eighth day. Perhaps the lack of detail as to which day between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension helps communicate this truth for application to all believers. In Scripture, the eighth day can often be a picture of new life. The disciples now lived in the new life of post-resurrection.

Sadly, the disciples still had a lack of clarity in this new life of the resurrection. The disciples seemed not to know what to do. Earlier, Jesus told them that he was now sending them as the Father sent him, yet Jesus was not constantly with them as he was before. So, they decided to go fishing.

I believe it is better to look at the disciples' act of going fishing, although they had left that life behind to follow Jesus, not as a sign of a rejection of his calling, but as a marker of their confusion. Not everything had yet clicked for them. Very soon it would though.

These disciples were out fishing. All night, they were unable to catch anything. Perhaps a frustrating venture for them. They remember when Jesus caused a miraculous catch for them. They also remembered their previous years of catching fish. Here, however, they caught nothing.

Then, off in the distance, there was a man standing on the beach. The disciples did not recognize who this was. This individual on the beach told them to cast their nets off the right-hand side of the boat. He said they would then find the catch.

That is exactly what happened. The net was so full of fish that their little boat could hardly hold all. In my opinion, if this were a movie, this catch would be the moment that would trigger a flashback memory. John would think about Jesus' calling of these disciples to follow him, in which he caused a similar miraculous catch. Then John would turn to Peter to tell him who this man was.

We don't know if that is how this truth was made evident to John, though. What we know is that John, now upon Jesus' word and power, knew it was him. He then tells Peter that this is the Lord. Peter then immediately puts his outer garment back on to jump into the water. Peter desired to go see and be with the Resurrected Lord. The other disciples followed on the boat.

On the boat, they cooked some of the fish that they caught at the command of Jesus. They had caught 153 fish. Then, on that early morning, Jesus ate breakfast with the disciples. Eating a meal with a person is important. There is intimacy to eating a meal. These disciples, including Peter, who denied Jesus, were able to join in on the intimacy of eating a meal with the Resurrected Lord.

As we look to this gospel, we see that the Resurrected Lord gives clarity. At the beginning of this reading, the disciples did not recognize Jesus. However, when they ate with him, no one dared to ask who he was. For these disciples, Christ gave clarity in faith and mission.

First, we consider the clarity of faith. The disciples still lacked clarity about what everything was. They had seen Jesus, yet they didn't know what to do, so they went fishing. When they saw Jesus again, they didn't recognize him. They may have been wondering what all this meant. So, Jesus appeared to them and gave them clarity. He showed that he was the same Jesus that they followed, just glorified now. He was still truly God and truly man. He had power, yet he ate fish. He was still their friend. He ate a meal with them. Jesus gave them clarity in faith.

The Resurrected Lord also gave them clarity in their mission. In a miracle that was reminiscent of his calling of the disciples, Jesus demonstrated that not only was he still the same Jesus, but they were still the same disciples. They were the ones that he called to not simply fish for fish, but to be fishers of men. After this, Jesus would give a clear charge to Peter to feed Jesus.

Dear friends, do you lack clarity? Maybe you look around, and things don't always look clear to you. Federal student loans are being enforced again. You stopped paying them years ago. Now, you feel like you don't have any clue how you would add \$300 to your monthly payments. You might wonder? What should I do, Lord? Mom's health is declining. You don't know if you have what it takes to watch her at home. You don't think that her savings will be able to cover the expenses of the nursing home. With all

the insurance jargon, you aren't sure if her insurance will cover any of it either. What should I do, Lord? Your fighting at home keeps getting worse. You and your spouse just can't seem to agree on anything. You don't agree on budgeting and spending. You don't agree on how to raise the kids. You don't see how you can continue to live together in any sort of peace. What should I do, Lord?

All sorts of occasions might make you feel like you have a lack of clarity about what to do and what this all means. In this uncertainty, do not despair in frustration. Do not fall into the lie and the trap that God does not have a plan for you. Instead, recognize that the Resurrected Lord gives you clarity as well. He gave the disciples clarity in the fact that he was alive. They saw for the third time and certain Jesus was alive. He should tell them that his mission for them was consistent. He showed them that his relationship with them was consistent as well. The Resurrected Lord gives you clarity as well.

Jesus' resurrection gives clarity about the power of God's Word, about Jesus' identity, your future, your purpose, and your suffering. Regarding the clarity of the power of God's Word and the certainty of his plan, numerous times throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, he said that he would die and rise from the grave. This happened just as he said. Jesus said he would rise, and he did. When God's Word declares something, it happens.

Jesus' resurrection gives clarity about Jesus' identity. Although the disciples did not recognize him immediately following his resurrection, Jesus' identity was made clear by his resurrection. About this, the Apostle Paul wrote, "who in the spirit of holiness was declared to be God's powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead – Jesus Christ, our Lord." (Romans 1:4). By the resurrection, there is clarity that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus' resurrection gives clarity about your future. In another location, the Apostle Paul talks about Jesus as simply the first to rise from the grave. He wrote, "But Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20) Since Jesus is alive, there is clarity that those who look to him in faith shall rise to life on the Last Day. There is no question or doubt about what comes after this life because Jesus rose.

Jesus' resurrection gives clarity about your purpose. As John demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit in this gospel, Jesus' resurrection is the truth. Jesus' followers are called in the truth, sanctified in the truth, and then moved to share the truth. The natural reaction of a person who has received clarity of the future from the Resurrected Lord is to share this clarity with other people. When you do not have questions about what is coming, you simply want to share this clarity with other people. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus gives clarity of purpose to his people. They want to share the news of this resurrection and its truth with others so that it may be made clear to them as well.

Jesus' resurrection also gives clarity to suffering. Any hardship and challenge, no matter how big or how small, is temporary. It will not last forever. Life in Jesus will last forever. The pain of this world will not. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection leads to clarity in the face of suffering. You know that it will come to an end one day. You know that the God who defeated sin, death, and the devil by the death and resurrection of Jesus has allowed certain suffering in your life, but he will bring it to its ultimate end in your resurrection.

Dear friends, the Resurrected Jesus gives clarity. May this clarity in Jesus move you through the various situations that you face. As you consider how to begin that payment that you put off, you know that any financial hardship will not last forever. Jesus gave you confidence in the riches of heaven by his death and resurrection. Now, to say thank you to the Resurrected Lord, you may get to choose to say, "No," to certain fun things in life so that you can glorify him by paying back those whom you owe. As you consider the uncertainty of how to deal with Mom's living situation, you can have peace in the

resurrection. Any challenge is temporary. If mom is a believer, Jesus' resurrection means that she will rise to eternal life. If mom isn't a believer, God has graciously allowed you to proclaim the resurrection to her. With the struggles at home, you can take solace in the confidence of forgiveness that comes from the Resurrected Lord. Just as he has forgiven you, you can forgive your spouse. As you face all of these situations, Jesus' resurrection won't mean everything is always easier. Jesus' resurrection does mean that there is clarity, though.

When Obi-Wan Kenobi came to speak to Luke Skywalker, Luke received clarity. The Resurrected Lord appeared to the disciples for the third time and gave them clarity. The Resurrected Lord gives you clarity, too, in your faith and life. Amen.