

*The disciples' surprise encounter with Jesus while fishing in Lake Galilee is an opportunity to explore the creative and symbolic right-brain images used by John since such encounter with the risen Christ defies any rational-logical state of mind.*

The gospel of John has two endings.

The first ending is the story we read about last week -  
when the disciples were behind locked doors.

It was when Jesus breathed new life into frightened souls.

That seemed like the end of John's gospel.



And then there is one more.

Maybe it was just hard for the writer of John to stop.

Think about how it has been for you

when you are telling someone

about something that was very exciting for you.

Sometimes you just keep thinking of one more thing.

Maybe it was like that for John.

Or maybe someone else came along a few years later  
and thought this story was just too good to leave out.

It was later - a few days – maybe weeks –  
and the disciples have gone back to their routines.

They were scattering. There were only seven now.

Everything had come to an end – or so it seemed.

They had gone back to Galilee.

They were fishing.

When you are fishing it is a good time to do some thinking.

To just sit quietly and let silence do its healing work.

Reflect on things.

Ever done that?

Who likes to fish?

When I went fishing in Lake Brownwood as a child -  
it was a quiet time to watch the cork or the bobble float -  
with its occasional tug that signaled that something was biting.

Something was stirring in deep waters.

One of my favorite moments in the past several years  
was sitting on the pier right on the Bayou Tesch  
at the UMCOR Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, Louisiana.

It was during a break in the afternoon.

I went out there to the pier and sat and stared at the water  
for two solid hours.

I knew that what I was doing was exploring something more intrinsic.

It was a prayerful time – a meditative time.

Surely you have had those times.



But fishing was the occupation for these seven -  
or it was before Jesus showed up – maybe not far from where they are  
now.

Their fishing was not like mine -  
with one line and a rod and reel.

They fished with big - heavy nets that smelled of seaweed and fish  
scales.

They did a lot of hauling them out of the bottom of the boat  
with calloused hands from years and years of casting  
and knotting and straining against the ropes.

They were not there to daydream -  
but to get back to the life they had known.

It was time - seriously -to learn to live without Jesus.  
But -they would never forget all those powerful moments -  
and the alternative outlook Jesus kept giving them -  
an outlook often counter to the common view.

Each one of them was sunk into his own thoughts.



Let's do that now.

Engage your right brains a little with this  
and let's explore some images -  
not the analytical - but the more creative and intuitive senses.

So – close your eyes and imagine a scene when I mention some words.

See it – hear it – smell it.

night time – water – ripples – boat - silence

splash – early dawn – rising mist – gradual sunrise<sup>1</sup>

(pause)

Now, be with the lake itself – the place where they are fishing.

Lakes in fairy tales and sacred legends - are symbolic places.

Because they are often deep and hold secrets

that can't be discerned from the surface.

They are places of mystery.

In Jungian psychology – they often represent the unconscious -  
the realm of our dreams and fantasies.

This scene at the end of John is dreamlike -

half way between night and day.

See the first hint of dawn seeping up along the horizon -

patches of mist and fog rising from the water.

Hear the gentle noise of waves slapping against the boat

or water dripping from the nets – all else is silent.

Occasionally you hear the deep sighs of the fishermen.

Their muscles ached -  
weak because they had not fished in awhile.

And then the stranger – over there on the shore –  
calls through the mist – telling them they will catch something -  
if they lower their nets on the other side of the boat –



Maybe Jesus was saying to the disciples here -  
that they could live and act as visionaries and artists.

Maybe God is a visionary and an artist!  
They could live nobly – generously – even if they didn't  
dot all the i's and cross the t's just right.

And if they did that – they would always find their nets full.  
They might live in the overflow of grace and excitement -  
with full nets.



That's not all.

They hear him. And - he seems to know they have no fish.

And then suddenly they do. They have fish everywhere -  
Peter throwing himself into the water.

They scramble for their oars and all get to the beach.

Come – he says to his wet and happy disciples – and have breakfast.

And they see it.

Copper coals are glowing in the sand  
and heat is rising in the cold morning  
Wood smoke curling through the air  
fish sizzling over the low flames



Dawn is a refreshing time -  
a time of possibility and promise.

Sometimes our lives are too fast for it.

But what if we did live more like that?

See yourself now – right here in this sanctuary  
as open to the future in a new way – blessed and generous.

We might discover what Peter did:  
how to see and to take the first few steps -  
as that servant kind of leader.



Open your eyes now and just be here – sitting in this church -  
back to the present.



What else does this gospel have for us today?

Perhaps this:

From time to time we are afraid  
when we are standing with empty nets -  
afraid that we have come to the end of something  
without any idea how to begin again.

First, it is probably a good idea to pay attention to strangers -  
especially those who seem to know things about you  
that they really have no way of knowing.

They may tell you where to cast your net.  
It's probably a good idea to pay attention -  
since Jesus has a whole lot of disguises.

Another clue that he may be somewhere around  
is a sudden change in fortune - good or bad.

I mean a sudden change in the way your life looks to you.

One moment it looks hopeless to you  
and the next you see possibilities you never saw before.

One moment the net looks empty and the next it does not.

That net in the deep water –  
the net is the boundary of your consciousness.

There is something alive in that net  
where there was nothing just a moment earlier.

Yes – God often appears at the edge of your consciousness.

Peter the beloved disciple said "It is the Lord!"

How did he know?

How do any of us know?

We watch the shore or we listen carefully.

We refuse to believe that our nets will stay empty.

We learn to live in expectation that what may seem like dead ends  
can be great beginnings.



The Easter experience is not a one-time event.

It's an ongoing one -  
of dawns and new days.  
If we are willing to consider the dawns in our lives -  
Easter is never quite done.

We might consider Easter when we let down the nets  
on the left side and the right side.  
And sometimes pay attention to the logical –  
rational in our learning.  
And sometimes pay attention to the creative – artistic.  
It takes both when following the spirit.



These are a few things to take from this story -  
things you can use every day.



Yes – that is reason enough for John to say –  
"one more thing"  
before he ends this gospel.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Killinger (1992) as adapted by Rex Hunt