

## Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 3rd Sunday of Easter May 4, 2025

[Music]

A few things to talk about before we begin.

And one of those would be,

you think you know something and you think you're familiar with it, only to find out you're not the hymnal.

I was as old as I am right now, when I learned that in the back of the hymnal,

there is tucked away the words for the nice scene in the Apostles Creed.

You knew this, probably, but I didn't.

So when I'm telling you, well, you can turn to this page of that page or the third page,

here's another option.

So if you'd like to have this handy for the nice in Creed's day,

you're welcome to use that.

Also, we've been trying to explain one way or another how to navigate the Psalms,

and thanks to Bob's ingenuity,

and a few of those little nice page-friendly little round stickers,

the Psalms will be marked.

And some of you have done a DIY with that, taking those stickers and marking the Psalm in your hymnal.

So I think that will facilitate us getting to the right Psalm when that comes as part of our service today.

[silence]

Look at all of the red.

We learned that today is Red Dress Sunday.

It's something that has been recognized for a few years now in the Synod.

And I will admit, I got caught on the back foot.

I had thought maybe it was later in May, and here we are.

Some among us who are more alert caught this and have offered,

I think, what is going to be a very meaningful and wonderful response,

everything from the display of a red dress itself to you all wearing red.

The background of this is that this is a way for us to remember our Indigenous siblings,

our sisters and brothers who mourn murdered and missing Indigenous women and children.

That's what this is all about.

And I think it is a timely reminder that we are indeed all related.

There is a quote that says that "Justice denied anywhere is justice denied everywhere."

And I think there is some powerful truth to that.

And to the theme of interconnection, Bobby has shared with us in print a poem that she's written called,

"Have You Seen My Sister?"

And Bobby, I'd like to call on you at this time if you would please read that for us.

Have you seen my sister?

She's just five feet tall.

Raven hair that just touches the bottom of her ears.

A giggly laugh and dancing dark eyes.

She loves loud music and she drinks a little, smokes a lot and often dreams out loud.

I saw her down by the mailbox hitchhiking into town.

She wore her favorite jeans and a bright green t-shirt that read, "Look out, here comes trouble."

That was last October.

The bartender said she called a bus to didn't know where.

Have you seen my sister?

Have you seen my mother?

She's just about my height.

Short hair, all burned with the new sprinklings of gray.

A belly laugh that hides the sadness in her green eyes.

She loves Elvis and she drinks a lot of coffee and smokes in secret and never dreams.

I saw her out by the barn getting ready to do the morning milking.

She wore her old work clothes and a purple bandana that she once wore to sit in.

That was last October.

Some folks say she called the bus to don't know where.

Have you seen my mother?

Have you seen my daughter?

She's taller than me.

She wears her hair in tiny braids that swing across her shoulders.

And in patient laugh and a warm hug.

She loves jazz and playing the flute.

And she drinks wine coolers, has never smoked, and has great dreams and plans of how her life is going to be.

I helped as she packed her bag and waved as she backed her second hand car out of the driveway on her way to a new job in a different town.

Her car was silver, her coat was navy blue.

She had a dream catcher hanging from her rear view mirror.

That was last October.

Her landlord said she never arrived.

Perhaps she changed her mind like young girls do and went to don't know where.

Have you seen my daughter?

Have you seen my mother?

Have you seen my sisters for the murdered and the missing?

[Music]

[Music]

**The Holy Gospel according to Saint John the 21st chapter. Glory to you, O Lord.**

After Jesus appeared to his followers in Jerusalem, he showed himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberias.

And he showed himself in this way.

Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas, called the twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Simon Peter said to them, "I'm going fishing."

And they said to him, "We will go with you."

They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples didn't know it was Jesus.

And Jesus called to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?"

And they answered, "No."

And he said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

That disciple, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

And when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment for he had taken it off.

And he jumped into the sea, but the other disciples arrived in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, and they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish on it and bread.

And Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you've just caught."

And so Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore full of large fish, 153 of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast."

Now, none of the disciples dared ask, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord.

Jesus came and he took bread, and he gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish.

This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

Simon said, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

And Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

A second time, Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

"Tend my sheep."

And a third time, Jesus said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter felt hurt because Jesus had said for the third time, "Do you love me?"

And so Simon said to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

And Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and go wherever you wished.

But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.

Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would see, or that he would glorify God.

Now after this, Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me."

The Gospel of our Lord.

"Forever and ever, Lord."

Or should be seated.

### **The Sermon**

Grace and peace to you from the one who was, who is, and who is to come.

Okay, who counted 153 sheep of the fish?

Whose job was that?

And what if there were only 147? Or what if there were 156?

Good old St. Augustine and Jerome after him thought there must be great symbolism in this 153 fish.

I think it's a stretch.

And you know, I don't think it's the number that matters so much.

But consider the contrast.

People who fish for a living, who've probably fished since they were old enough to walk,

they cast out, they spend the night fishing, which is evidently a good time to catch fish,

and they come up blank, goose egg, nothing, not a fish, no fish for you.

And then, they pitch their nets over to the right side of the boat,

and now they have more than they know what to do with, if you like, 153 of them.

That's a lot of fish.

Certainly more than a few disciples could eat.

So you wonder if maybe the whole village got to eat thanks to this abundance.

Imagine that.

The desolation and the despair of emptiness transformed into staggering abundance.

Doesn't that sound like an Easter story?

Like people approaching the tomb and expecting death and finding out that the tomb is not only empty,

but the former occupant is risen from despair to overwhelming abundance.

You might be forgiven if your mind sort of backtracks and reminisces about Cana in Galilee

in a wedding where there was extravagant abundance, where, again,

John kept count of just how many jars there were, how many gallons there were, of best of show line when Jesus gets finished with water.

A wedding that threatened to implode because of emptiness becomes a sign of God's extravagant abundance.

And it happens in Cana of Galilee.

This is bonus material.

I won't charge you extra, but here we go.

Guess who is from Cana of Galilee?

Our man Nathaniel.

Remember him before he meets Jesus?

Yeah, great.

Can any good come out of Nazareth?

Hmm.

I think maybe the writer of John's Gospel had a little fun.

He couldn't name Nathaniel as one of the others unnamed, but he names him Nathaniel, Cana of Galilee.

I think we're supposed to appreciate the detail.

And we are reminded again of someone going from skepticism to abiding faith.

When I speak of abundance and quote Jesus saying that he comes to give abundant life,

I don't speak of material wealth.



In fact, that kind of makes me a little nervous.

But it's more the kind of abundance that you heard when Marilyn read to us the story of Saul,

a persecutor of people of the way who eventually converts.

But I don't think that the great miracle is that Saul has his sight restored.

I think the great miracle is that Ananias, someone who had hidden from Saul

and who instructed his people to do likewise, is instructed to open his home to Saul.

And he does.

That seems like abundance to me.

Perhaps a more contemporary example.

It goes back a few years, but at the National Convention of our church,

it was held in Regina, Saskatchewan that year.

Treaty Six Territory.

The church setting its heart and mind on reconciliation at that assembly did one important thing.

They repudiated what was called the Doctrine of Discovery.

They said that we were guilty of heresy for a long time,

and that we were guilty of heresy that ruined people, particularly our indigenous siblings.

But the abundance came by having an elder from one of the indigenous communities speak to a whole bunch of Lutherans.

The elder said to us, "The fact that we are together makes this a beautiful and sacred space."

I can think of at least one pastor who was reduced to a teary mess,

some guy from Boseshire, Manitoba at the time.

You've probably met him.

He was a member of an elder who had had a lifetime and generational trauma inflicted on him.

To say to those who were descended from the colonizers,

"We are together. We now make this place sacred and beautiful because of who we are together."

That's what I mean when I speak of abundance.

There's another detail in the story that I skipped over until I heard me reading this morning, the Gospel.

So Peter and the rest are schlepping all of those fish ashore, aren't they?

And there's already some there.

That should teach us something.

That when we are called to follow the risen Christ, we are not sent out on a DIY project.

God goes with us.

The risen Christ empowers us.

And if we go back to what we give thanks for in baptism,

we know that we are grafted into a story that takes us from death and nothingness and despair to life and life abundant.

It is safe to say that Jesus calls us to that sort of abundance.

And that is no small thing.

And it is miraculous that anybody would even consider that when you think about the world that we inhabit.

How precarious, how tenuous does our existence feel just now?

Some of us are maybe delaying plans that we had.

Maybe we're not spending money the way we once spent because we don't know what sort of drama we'll visit us next week.

We may worry for our children and grandchildren.

We may wonder if speaking for justice and peace is worth it.

A few weeks back I quoted the Reverend Dr. William Barber, director of the Poor People's Campaign.

You may have heard that he was arrested last week because he prayed quietly for justice and for peace.

He happened to be standing in the US Capitol at the time.

Now you can fact check me a little bit on this, but I think others have maybe staged other things in the Capitol.

They were pardoned.

Will Dr. Barber be pardoned for praying?

Jesus didn't say follow me because this is a piece of cake.

But follow me because this is the stuff of abundant life that God promises because God so loved the world.

We follow because we are invited and we follow empowered not by our own head of steam or cleverness to be sure,

but by the very abundance that God lavishly pours out for us and for the sake of the world.

Boy, that sounds a lot more exciting than 153 big fat stinking fish, doesn't it?

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]

[Music]