

**Sermon      May 4, 2025      John 21:1-14**

**Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!**

Today we gather on the shore of morning's new light—both here in our sanctuary and, in imagination, on the little beach at the Sea of Tiberias. It is Confirmation Sunday, and our hearts are full. The risen Lord has met us here, revealed Himself again, called His disciples and us to Himself in grace.

### **I. The Resurrected Lord's Invitation (John 21:1–3)**

Imagine the tension in those early morning hours. Peter, fresh from his three denials and the death and resurrection appearance of Jesus, cannot sleep. He and six companions leave the house, slip onto a boat, and push off into the blackness of the Sea of Galilee. They fish all night—with nothing to show for it. Many of us know that feeling: we've labored, prayed, hoped—and come up empty. Perhaps you, in your confirmation preparation, have wrestled with doubt, questions swirling like the waves around that boat.

Then dawn breaks. A figure stands on the shore—silent at first. “Children, have you any fish?” Come, Jesus inquires, not to trick but to restore. “No,” they answer. It is honest: our confession of sin admits we have none of our own to bring to God.

### **II. Obedience and Abundance (John 21:4–6)**

Jesus bids them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” It is a simple command. It resonates with the pattern of our catechism instructing us: God's Word is for our comfort and nourishment.

Obedience opens the net of God's blessings—not because our works merit God's favor, but because then we can receive the living Word of the crucified and risen Christ and live in his grace and mercy. Think of Pittsburg's own Mr. Rogers, who faithfully followed his calling every day for decades. He didn't seek a big audience, but his gentle obedience brought quiet, abundant impact that touched millions.

The disciples obey—and suddenly the net groans under 153 large fish. Have you ever seen someone laboring for years at a project—writing a book, raising a family, building a career—and then, in a moment of humble faith, everything

falls into place. The net was so full they could not haul it in. Our God is not a minimalist; He is extravagant. When Christ speaks, He doesn't just give a little; He gives Himself fully.

### **III. The Feast on the Shore (John 21:7–14)**

When Peter realizes it is the Lord, he strips off his outer work clothes and jumps into the water—enthusiastic, repentant, eager to be reunited. Notice: he doesn't wait to make amends with Jesus. He trusts the invitation he already knows: "Follow me." Meanwhile, the others row the fish-laden boat to land where they find a charcoal fire, fish roasting, and bread. Jesus invites them: "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Then Jesus takes the bread, gives it to them; so also the fish. This simple meal is dense with meaning. Bread and fish—basic, everyday food—become the means by which the risen Christ feeds His frightened, doubting disciples. They could not help but remember the times when Jesus miraculously provide fish and loaves for the thousands along the same shore. Now he does the same for them.

José Andrés, after devastating hurricanes in Puerto Rico, loaded his food trucks with simple meals—rice, beans, fish—and served countless hungry families. In doing so, he echoed Jesus on that shore, bringing comfort in crisis, hope in despair. Real people, real fish, real bread—handed out in love by Christ's servants—bring the tangible reality of God's care.

### **IV. Fish, Bread, and the Lord's Supper**

As Jesus feeds the disciples with fish and bread. It also calls us to see that this meal anticipates the continuation of the Lord's Supper—the Sacrament in which Christ gives us His true body and blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins. Just as the disciples saw, tasted, and believed, so also we eat and drink Christ's body and blood, not symbolically, but truly, by His Word.

When you, dear confirmand, approach the Lord's Table for the first time, you will taste forgiveness, healing, and unity in Christ. In this meal he proclaims: "Your sin is gone. My peace I give to you."

### **V. Confirmation: A Holy Vow**

Today we rejoice as our catechumen Ryder stands before the congregation

and makes his solemn vow of baptismal faith: to hear God's Word, receive the sacraments, and live as one belonging to God, faithful to the end.. This vow is not a private contract but a public confession—and Jesus meets you yet again on that shore of life's uncertainty.

Just as He fed Peter and the others, so He feeds you. And as Peter stepped onto the water once more, walking toward Jesus in faith, so you are called to step forward in your daily vocations—at school, in your family, in your friendships—trusting that Christ goes before you.

When a soldier takes their oath, they vow to serve with honor—not because they're perfect, but because they've pledged their allegiance. Confirmation is like that—Ryder, you are not claiming to be flawless, but that Christ is your Savior and that you will stand under His banner.

## **VI. Following the Risen Christ Today**

What does it mean to be a disciple today? It means first to listen: to approach the Scriptures not as a self-help guide, but as the living Word that calls you. It means to confess: to admit your sins and cling to Christ's promise of forgiveness. It means to partake: to receive the Lord's Supper with reverence and joy. And it means to serve. A couple weeks ago when you circled back after the BMX crash, you showed what discipleship looks like: sacrifice, compassion, and courage. You didn't win the race, but you lived the Gospel. That's what Jesus calls all of us to: to run the race of faith not for trophies, but for love.

## **VII. A Call to the Confirmands—and to All of Us**

Ryder, today you publicly affirm your baptismal faith. You promise to be Christ's own, to remain in His Church, and to serve His world. Remember the breakfast on the beach. Every time you hear the words of institution before Communion, picture that charcoal fire, smell the cooking fish, remember the loaves. Feel the warmth of Christ's outstretched hand. And remember Peter's selfless dive into the water—bold, imperfect, yet forgiven.

A family once bought a dining table when they had their first child. Over the years, they kept adding leaves to the table as more kids were born, friends joined, and holidays brought strangers close. The Lord's Table is like that. It's

not static. It grows. It makes room. And today, Ryder, the table expands again—for you.

For the rest of us: let us support this young disciple -and all our young disciples - with prayer, encouragement, and our own faithful example. As Christ has long welcomed us to his table, how good for us to welcome new confirmands to dine with us and share the wonders of his grace and mercy until we are all gathered before the glorified Lord on the Last Day and together go into an eternity of everlasting blessedness and joy. Amen

Pastor Ron Breight

Christ Lutheran Church

Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

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