

Resurrection as Abundance
Oak Grove Presbyterian Church
Rev. Mary Koon
Golden Stories, October 3, 2021
John 21:1-19

As followers of Jesus, it is true that we are Easter people living in a Good Friday world. Each Sunday when we gather is like a mini-Easter, as we proclaim the good news that Christ is alive, that love wins despite the injustices and pain in our world.

Today we begin a four-part series on resurrection. What does it mean to live into the reality of resurrection in our lives today as individuals and a church?

Resurrection is abundance. When we experience the abundance of God, we are moved to gratitude, to praise, to wonder and to service.

Today's service braids three golden strands representing the abundance of God, the resurrection story of Jesus on the beach and his communion-like meal of fish and bread, Golden Harvest stories and wisdom, and World Communion.

Listen now to how the absolute extravagance of God's love is expressed in the Gospel of John, chapter 21...

...Jesus 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, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."

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 did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” 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!”

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for 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. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So, Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.”

Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and 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?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you

know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep...” after this he said to him, “Follow me.” AMEN.

Luther Seminary professor Karoline Lewis says that too often we conveniently limit resurrection to an eschatological promise, as in, it will happen in the end times or at the end of our lives, and not an incarnational, material truth in our lives. In this story, God’s grace and abundant love is revealed in fish, 153 of them to be exact. So many that they can barely haul them out of the boat. There’s more than enough!

The disciples recognize Jesus as their lack of fish is transformed into full, overflowing nets, when despair turns to hope, and as Jesus restores his relationship with Peter.

God’s love that renews, restores, uplifts, and gives new life is revealed in moments of abundance. Abundant laughter, song, love, conversation, beauty, joy and serving others.

As followers of Jesus, it is faithful practice to approach our lives through a lens of abundance, rather than scarcity. In so doing, blessings are found in two ways. First, after our basic needs are met, the recognition that everything else is more than enough, the icing on the cake, as it were, allows us to appreciate life’s fullness and find joy in ourselves and one another, in the little things, and recognize that we are enough. Second, seeing the world through a lens of abundance awakens us to the truth that God has given us all the materials (human and otherwise) needed to make sure everyone has enough, that justice is done. Like Jesus asking the disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, we are called to think creatively about healing this world and sharing that abundance.

This lens of abundance is what I thought about as I read Dorothy and Gordon Beattie’s story. They write, “2020 was like no other year: No volunteering, no entertaining and no in-person shopping. Lots of togetherness... puzzles, old movies, books on tablets, CD’s, cleaning drawers and cupboards, tossing out unneeded things. More cooking and

baking, less money spent on eating out. Calling folks, we didn't normally call, to check in all this made life good. It was a different year, and we have no complaints. We were blessed with caring family and friends. a connected church and good health, can't ask for anything more."

Looking at the end of our text, God's abundance is revealed in the restoration of relationship. So often we see this little interaction with Jesus and Peter as a form of forgiveness for Peter's denial of Jesus by the fire on the night of Jesus' arrest. But if we re-examine the text, Peter's denial was really a denial of his true self and identity as God's beloved. On the beach Jesus offers abundant restoration, reconciliation and presents the challenge to Peter and to us all, "How will we participate in God's abundance and help reveal God's grace to others?"

Today's World Communion offers us a chance to enact God's abundance at the ever-widening table of grace, as we eat with others and are filled with God's spirit.

Grace upon grace. Resurrection is abundance.

Stories of Abundance

LeRoy and Jane Horn have abundant stories of the sea. They have participated in ocean adventures in places that few of us will ever see, often escaping the bitter MN winters for warmer climates. On her 400th scuba dive, Jane lyrically describes the beauty and joy of diving into warm cobalt blue waters, being with fish like neon colored Fairy Basslets, long purple rope sponges and yellowmouth grouper. She feels content swimming with Redspotted Hawkfish and Feather Duster Worms beneath in this color-filled wonder, this peaceful garden, accepted by these creatures. When the earth beckons, she reluctantly leaves the beauty and familiarity of this underwater Eden.

And LeRoy tells of the abundance of powerful wind and waves on a winter sailing trip to St. Martin. LeRoy was the experienced sailor on the

boat and was in charge that day when the rain started falling, the wind began to blow and the sea was roiling. Meanwhile, Jane ministered to her sister, Anne, giving her the Heimlich as she choked on a cracker. (Anne was fine!)

The storm caused the bow of the ship to rise and fall over and over again. The crew was tired and drenched, Anne below deck with seasickness. Eventually, everyone made it to land safely and decided on a ski trip for the following winter!

When Jan Carter was a girl, her neighbors had a small farm with an apple orchard. Jan, her sisters, and the neighbor children decided it would be a good idea to steal crab apples from the orchard. They would sneak into the orchard, scared all the while, grab some apples and run home.

Finally, one day, they decided that what they were doing was wrong and would confess to their stealing. Now, the farm and orchard were owned by an older woman, Miss Lizzie, and her daughter. There were rumors that the older woman was very mean, but that the younger woman was nice. They all got together and went to the orchard and knocked on the door. Their knees were shaking, they were afraid. The younger woman answered the door but the children, feeling the guilt, asked to see Miss Lizzie.

The children approached the older lady, who was sitting in a rocking chair, with trepidation. Voices quivering, they confessed their crime... they were stealing apples from the orchard and were very, very sorry.

Instead of being angry, Miss Lizzie, the one whom they feared, looked up at the children from her rocker and forgave them. She told them that any time they wanted apples, to take them – as many as they'd like.

Grace upon grace...resurrection is abundance.

If we are lucky enough to live a long life, and if we pay attention to the ways that God continues to show up, we will become wise. The Golden Harvest honorees shared a treasure trove of wisdom...

Crafter and sewer Jan Lichtenberger learned early...don't start any project if you aren't going to finish it! She learned this from her mother and passed it along to her children.

Ken Hanson, 101 years young, advises you to listen to your body... be moderate in drinking.

And Glenn Pettit, 101 years old, too, continues to stay young with a passion he loves, scratchboard art. His apartment displays an abundant collection of his talent. Glenn started doing scratchboard art to find a way to express his creativity without a lot of tools or space!

Adventurous Nancy Kachel says, "Don't put off what is on your bucket list. Find a way to make it happen!"

Dorothy Beattie says, "Think positively!" It's worked for her!

Gordon and Jeanne Goodwin believe that it's the simple acts of kindness that count. Pre-pandemic, it was their Sunday mission to help folks with hearing aids learning about the church's listening devices. Wiring them up and checking in with them, the password was, "Can you hear me now?"

Quilter extraordinaire Iris says, "measure twice, cut once." Doing this ultimately saves time. This is wisdom when it comes to sewing, building, living and relationships. Think before you act, you save yourself a lot of time and headache. It's also a good reminder to slow down, enjoy the process and enjoy a positive outcome.

Maxine Engberg, filled to brim with thankfulness for this congregation, told me, “We all have our ups and downs, but we remain thankful for life goes on.”

Bea Sorenson says that she has learned to be comfortable with mystery. When she was young, she questioned so many things and wanted answers. There are unknowns in life and death... so embrace mystery.

And finally, the Larry and Darlene Thronson remind us that the mind is a powerful thing. “What we believe is what we manifest in our lives. So, believe that you are valuable and worthy and strong and loved and joyful and brave and unique and powerful beyond measure.”

Grace upon grace, resurrection is abundance.

May it be so. AMEN.