



Broad Street Presbyterian Church

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“Too Much”

John 21:1-19

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Last Sunday was incredible. The big crowds. The noise. The excitement. I’m not talking about our two Easter services. I’m talking about the final game of this year’s NCAA Women’s Basketball tournament held right here in Columbus. I had the opportunity to be there and it was awesome!!!

And our Easter services were pretty awesome too. My favorite moment was the end when the choir quietly and beautifully reminded us that Easter happens because God so loved the world.

It was quite a Sunday—the tournament and Easter and April’s Fool day all falling on the same day. It was too much of a good thing. I confess that this week has felt like a bit of a letdown. And it shouldn’t. Easter isn’t a day. It’s supposed to be a season, fifty days, six Sundays in which we celebrate the good news that Christ is risen indeed.

But, maybe it’s been a good week for you. Looking at it another way, depending what you gave up for Lent it’s been a pretty good week, right?

There is a website called the Lenten Twitter Tracker in which a guy named Stephen Smith, who may have too much time on his hands, tracks and analyzes what people give up for Lent based on their tweets.¹ In 2018, the top things people gave up for Lent in descending order are:

- Social networking
- Twitter
- Alcohol
- Chocolate
- Swearing
- Meat
- Sweets
- Soda
- Coffee

Yeah, depending what people gave up for Lent it’s been a pretty good week. I gave up not exercising for Lent. My goal was to exercise every day. I didn’t meet the goal but I did pretty well and overall it was a good thing. But I may have missed the point. If I had given up, say, chocolate for Lent, I would have been reminded of that choice twice a day. Because, yes, I eat one small square of dark chocolate after lunch and after dinner every day. It’s a lovely and delicious habit. If I had given that up for Lent, twice daily I would have been reminded of the season, challenged to think about God and, come Easter morning, chocolate would have tasted so good.

¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/february/what-to-give-up-for-lent-2018-top-ideas-twitter-100.html>

Giving things up for Lent prepares us for Easter. The denial of things that are good, delightful, lovely, delicious prepares us for a season that celebrates those things in abundance.

I have to be honest. I find Lent an easier season. It's a time to focus on things we ministers just can't get enough of—things like sin, mortality, repentance, and remorse. Lent is a time to take a look at the lives we are living and take stock. During Lent, we focus on ourselves—our failings, our shortfalls, our brokenness. That is comfortable territory for us. As a group, we Presbyterians are better at self-discipline than gratitude. It is hard for us to celebrate God's good gifts and jump headlong into this season of abundance and excess. Which brings us to this morning's reading.

The excitement of Easter is over. The disciples go back to work. They go back to being who they were before Easter. They go back to fishing. They fish into the night.

Jesus, newly risen from the dead, appears at daybreak and the disciples (the Gospel of John is clear about this) do not recognize him. From the shore, he calls out across the water,

Have you any fish?

The disciples have caught nothing. Despite the fact that they are professional fishermen, they catch no fish. Jesus says, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." Try the other side. They do so and their net is soon full—full of 153 fish. You don't have to be an expert in fishing to know that 153 is a lot of fish. We're talking abundance, excess, plenty, more than enough.

When Peter finds out that the stranger on the beach is none other than the Lord, he gets very excited and jumps into the water. By the time he and the disciples make it to shore with their full nets, Jesus has breakfast ready for them. More fish than they can eat. More bread than they can hold. It's a breakfast feast. Abundance, plenty, more than enough

Today's reading is strange and delightful, odd and wonderful, and there is lots of food. It's all too much. Too many good things. Too many fish. Too much bread at this campfire on the beach.

I have always loved this passage. And no surprise because I love every element of it.

I love the beach. Any beach. My favorite time to go to the beach is early morning to watch the sunrise. I do my best thinking, my best dreaming, my best connecting with God walking a beach while light slowly infuses the sky.

I love campfires. I like every part of the process of making one. Picking the right spot. Gathering a good combination of wood and sticks and kindling. Carefully arranging the wood so that air will be able to help the fire burn. Starting the blaze with a match. Coaxing that small fire into a bigger one.

I especially love campfires on beaches.

I love breakfast. It is my favorite meal of the day. I love virtually all breakfast foods. Toast and cereal—love it. I enjoy eggs cooked all different ways. Don't get me started on breakfast meat—sausage, bacon, ham—I love them all.

This story has so many things in it that I love. If only there were dark chocolate in this story as well.

Seriously, you know what I love the most in this passage? Actually, whom I love the most? I love Jesus. I don't usually phrase it that way, but it's true. I particularly love the Jesus of this passage. He shows up—not just at church or during established religious times and places—he shows up in the middle of our lives, in the middle

of our days. I need Jesus on the beach and at the office, in the car with me and while shopping at the grocery store. All of us need a Savior who accompanies us on our everyday journeys, who sees us in those ordinary circumstances, and who speaks in those times and places. And he doesn't offer us advice or criticism. He offers food, nourishment, community, abundance, plenty, more than enough. I love the Jesus of this passage.

This story has so many good things in it which makes it the perfect Easter season story.

Fifty days is not long enough to celebrate the good news that Jesus of Nazareth was God's beloved and that he lived and died for us and that God raised him from the dead, and, therefore, death no longer has any power over us. Because of what happened on Easter morning many centuries ago, there is too much—too much love, too much grace, too many good things. More bread than we can eat. Our cup overflows. Abundance, plenty, excess, more than enough.

This morning, you may not be feeling that abundance. You may look at your life and feel more loss than love, more fear than hope, more emptiness than meaning. It can be hard to trust in abundance. It can be hard to trust that there will be enough to go around. I wonder... when we least expect it, when all hope is gone, when our hearts are breaking, when we think there is no future, when our well has dried up, when we question if grace is for us, perhaps this is the resurrection story we need. Desperately. All of us. This reminder that resurrection is abundance. This reminder that Jesus will always show up on the shore, will invite us to share a meal once again so that we can taste and see that what God provides is good.

It seems that God truly does love the world and every person in it.

We know that because...

He is risen. He is risen indeed.

Amen.