

Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-14

What were the disciples doing out on the Lake of Galilee fishing? Why weren't they in Jerusalem starting churches? Why weren't they busy telling everyone about Jesus?

There were seven followers of Christ there that day. They had all been through a life-altering experience not too long before. They had seen Jesus, their Teacher and Leader for three years, arrested, tried, hung on a cross, and then resurrected! Like us, they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. He was their Savior. He had guaranteed their relationship with Himself for eternity. That they understood—just like we do. So, why were they fishing instead of preaching the Gospel?

Just as we feel sometimes, the disciples weren't too sure of anything except Jesus' love for them. They had seen Him in the upper room and witnessed Thomas' doubt and reassurance. Life was beginning to calm down and make sense again. Perhaps Jesus would soon establish His kingdom and restore Israel to its rightful place in God's world. That would be glorious! That was about as far as their own vision could take them. Jesus had other plans, and He came to the shore of the lake to let them know that their lives in Him were only just beginning. His vision went far beyond anything that they thought they would be able to accomplish. By His power in their lives, they spread the Gospel throughout the world.

How is your vision for God's kingdom? Though most of us aren't pastors or professional church workers, we too are ready to receive His visit and His vision. We know that Jesus loves us as we go about with our "fishing" each day. We look forward to an eternity with Him, but there is more. Jesus still invites us to sit on the shore with Him and hear about *HIS* vision concerning our place and our work in His kingdom.

Is your Bible study group serving in God's world?

(A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee)



Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-14

1. Peter says "I'm going out to fish." (vs. 3) Why would this be a logical activity for Peter and other disciples? (see Matthew 4:18)
2. Jesus does one final miracle before He ascends from earth. What happened as the disciples followed Jesus' instructions? (vs. 6, 11)
3. Initially the disciples did not recognize Jesus. (vs. 4) Later (vs. 12) "They knew it was the Lord." What changed their perception?

4. This incident is one of several post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. (vs. 14) Paul summarizes Jesus' appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. What was the purpose of Jesus' appearances?



5. Which disciple is being referred to in vs. 7? (See also John 13:23 and the Concordia Self-study Bible note.)
6. In the past few weeks we have seen the resurrected Jesus with the women at the tomb, with Thomas and the disciples in the upper room, and now with the disciples on the shore. Where do we continue to meet our resurrected Lord?

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-47

Sometimes the way that a phrase is translated out of Greek and into English is really important. When Peter's listeners heard the words recorded in verse 40, they heard, "Be saved!" What a wonderful message!

Peter's listeners had never heard that message before. All that they had ever learned about coming to God involved their own work! One could only get to God by abiding by all of His Law, and not only the Ten Commandments, but all of the hundreds of laws that tradition had heaped upon them over the years. Arguments continued among the religious leaders as to whether a tailor was working on the Sabbath if he slid a needle into the material of his cloak; could one pull a donkey from the well on the Sabbath; could one set a broken bone on the Sabbath. And these were some examples only of laws that applied to the Sabbath. Think what a burden was upon the typical believer who wanted to please God.

Peter "kept on exhorting them." One can imagine that many were at first skeptical about the idea that they could be saved without doing the work themselves. Peter pleaded with them to believe.

We can empathize with Peter's task. People still want to be their own saviors. We like to think that our destiny is in our own hands. It's hard for us to imagine that someone could forgive us and remove our guilt without our own work contributing to the process. Most of the world's religions would agree. Our culture is filled with religious beliefs that include retribution or reward for our actions, working or thinking our way into godhood, or perfecting our human attributes into Utopia. All of these have failed miserably. Peter's listeners had been in the same mire, and they also knew that there was just no way for them to force their way into God's presence.

Peter proclaimed to them and to us that God's grace is *free* but not cheap, simple but not simplistic. God sent His willing Son to die as a final sacrifice; to be God separated from God on the cross. Is it good news? The Bible says that this one sermon from Peter added three thousand souls to the Kingdom.

Do you study God's Word regularly?

(A message from your District Education Committee)



Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-47

1. "Then" (vs.14) indicates a transition. What is the context of Peter's message? (see vs. 1-13)
2. Summarize the Law aspects of Peter's sermon. (vs. 36, 40)
3. Summarize the Gospel message of Peter's sermon. (vs. 38-39)
4. How do we see the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in this setting? (vs. 41)
5. Vs. 42-47 describe the early church. What were some of the activities and responses in this infant church in Jerusalem?
6. Compare your church with the Pentecost church (vs. 42-47). What similar responses do you note? What can your church learn or apply from the early church?



Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:8-12

The men who had persecuted Jesus as a blasphemer; who had convicted him in an illegal trial; who had lied and schemed to force through the judgment of death from Pilate; surrounded Peter and John. Yet Peter preached to these men that they had murdered the Son of God who had been resurrected from the dead. Peter proclaimed, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” This is the third time recorded in Acts that Peter has preached the same basic message to his Jewish brothers, and these brethren could have him killed for it. Is Easter worth dying for? Is the Gospel? Were the men surrounding Peter and John worth the risk?

In a world that proclaims that it doesn't matter what you believe so long as you're sincere, Christians hold high the light of the gospel. Jesus is the ONLY way of salvation! If Jewish law, for instance, could have saved the men questioning the disciples, then Peter would not have had to risk his life before them, and Jesus would not have had to offer His life for them on the cross.

Presented with the truth of who and what Jesus was, the religious authorities sent Peter and John out of the room, so that they could decide what to do. Did they discuss the message of Peter? Did they consider their sinful plight and wonder if they had indeed murdered God's Son? No, they just discussed how to make sure that Peter didn't continue to preach his message. We don't know how many of them, if any, ever came to know Jesus as Lord. Perhaps some did; maybe the one who told Luke about the meeting behind closed doors.

When we look back on these religious leaders and shake our heads, it is not with an air of superiority. It is with the realization that without Jesus we would be as lost as they. The Easter message is one of both triumph and grace. Like Peter, who sank when he tried to walk on water, urged Jesus not to go to Jerusalem, fell asleep in the garden while Jesus prayed, and denied his Lord when He needed him most, we deserve nothing, but we have received everything.



Now is the best time to join a Bible study.

A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:8-12

1. Read Acts 4:1-7. What incident precedes the proclamation of Peter in today's lesson?
2. According to vs. 8, what empowers Peter to share his message? When did this power begin to especially influence Peter's life and message? (See Acts 2)
3. Where is the law in vs. 10? Where is the gospel?
4. Where is vs. 11 found in the Old Testament? Who is the “stone” that is now the “capstone?” What is the meaning of this prophecy?
5. How does vs. 12 address the perception that there are many ways to heaven?
6. How did the power of a resurrected Jesus change Peter's life? (vs. 7) What power does Jesus resurrection give to you? Read (or sing) “All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.” (LW#272; TLH#339)



Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:1-20

Saul dropped to his face in the presence of the risen Christ. Until that moment, He had been unaware of his sin or at least unwilling to see it. Confronted by Jesus, he could no longer deny his rebellion. In all of his battle against what he believed to be error, he was persecuting the Christ.

Saul, soon to be Paul, once described himself as the greatest of sinners, but we have all rebelled against God and would be condemned without the intervention of Christ. He has come into each of our lives and overwhelmed us with His glory. Many of us cannot recall when that first happened, having been infants at the time, but in our baptism Jesus came to us as we lay in the dust at His feet, and He raised us up for a purpose.

As an infant in the faith, Saul had no idea what God had in mind for his life. When God approached the fearful Ananias with news of Saul, He told the believer that Saul would be taught what he must endure in order to accomplish his life's path. His training came quickly and he "immediately" began to proclaim Christ as the Son of God.

As infants in the faith we did not know what God had planned for our lives; how we would serve Him and spread the gospel message. Do you know now what God has in mind for you? Many of us would stumble as we tried to answer that question. We may envy Saul's personal confrontation with Jesus; his assurance of his path; even his training under God's guidance in the wilderness. Yes, Saul, or Paul, had an advantage.

Paul's "advantage," however, did not guarantee that he would always know just where to go or have all of the answers to his questions. He talked of seeing in a "mirror dimly" but at the same time was certain that all would become clear one day. He stumbled at times and hit the proverbial "brick wall" on many occasions. He was stoned, beaten, rejected, and finally lost his head to the sword of Rome. But, through it all Paul trusted God to lead him and use him to proclaim the risen Christ to all those around him. The Holy Spirit enabled him to do that, and He enables us to be the Pauls of our communities, churches, and world.



Learn more about Paul in a Bible study.

(A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee)

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:1-20

1. How is Saul introduced in Acts 8:1? What was his mission in Damascus?
2. How does Saul address the voice from heaven? (vs. 5) Who is the light and the voice? (vs. 5)
3. Who is God's instrument of intervention and direction for Saul? Why was he cautious about addressing Saul? Why did he eventually go to Saul?
4. What is God's plan for Saul? (vs. 15-16) Who was the power behind the plan? (vs. 17) In what way was the plan initiated? (vs. 18)
5. What is the significance of 9:20? What is amazing about this statement?
6. It's the 3rd Sunday of the Easter season. Where's the Easter power and Easter message in this story?



Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14, 36-47

Peter begins today's lesson saying that because of the facts he has cited, his listeners cannot help but acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they sought to crucify, was indeed the Son of God and the Messiah. Three thousand people who heard his words were baptized into the kingdom of God that day.

We are the spiritual descendants of these diverse peoples who happened to be gathered in Jerusalem hearing Peter's sermon. Like them we are baptized members of God's family. There are some things about our faith lives, however, that are not as visible as they were in our ancestors. Those people were dramatically changed by God when they first believed in Jesus as their Savior. They did not grow up in Christianity. They did not wonder what all the fuss was about as they gathered in homes to celebrate the living Savior who had been crucified and raised from the dead.

"Ah Ha!" you may say, "But we were changed too in our baptism." That is true. We are changed in a moment from sinners on our way to an inevitable hell into the children of God who have had their sins washed away by the blood of Jesus. What often makes us different from our spiritual ancestors in Jerusalem is that we don't express the awe and excitement that they did concerning the wonderful, merciful life given to them by a gracious Father.

Those who followed our ancestors into the faith only a few years later had the same experience as we. The cares of life, the trials and persecutions, the busyness of jobs and family drew them away from the excitement of knowing Jesus. Today we are even more tempted to become blasé about our faith; about the death in our behalf of the one innocent Man ever born. We may feel bored in worship; too busy to participate in outreach to the lost; too tired to go to a Bible study; too involved in other things to sense the triumph of salvation!

Let's use these few weeks of the Easter season to stop and refresh our appreciation of God's gift. We have something to share with the world that outlasts and outshines anything else that we have to offer. We have an empty tomb!

Learn more about Jesus' unsurpassed love for us in a Bible study this week.

A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee.

Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14, 36-47

Exploring the Text:

1. Read the earlier verses of this chapter. What is the context for Peter's sermon?
2. Where is the resurrection message in Peter's sermon?
3. What evidences of the work of the Spirit do we find in this text?
4. According to vs. 38-39 what are the blessings of Baptism? Who receives the blessings of baptism?

Family Table Talks:

5. Verses 42-47 describe the early church. How are the activities of your church like those of the first church?
6. When were you baptized? What blessings does God continue to give you in your baptism? How do you remember baptisms in your family and in your church?

Third Sunday of Easter

1 John 1:1-2:2

John also wrote the Gospel of John, and one can see that book in this letter. John's constant message was that Jesus is the Son of God and God—not a man who was like God, nor God pretending to be a man, but the only God-Man, one hundred percent God and one hundred percent Man. He came to us as a Man, yet He also created this world. This was important to John because he understood that we truly have a relationship with God through our Lord Jesus. More than knowing what we are and what we see and do, Christ empathizes with us. He understands the pain and temptations that we have. He has demonstrated to us what life would be like if every temptation were resisted, because that is what He did. Jesus lived the sinless life that we cannot. However, John believed that, regardless of its impossibility, our calling as Christians is to live just as Christ commands.

John's words are tough. He tells us that if we *“say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”* We could arrogantly assume that John means we can and must maintain a sinless life and thus protect our salvation. But, John was not saying this. He knew that we cannot be perfect nor can we either win or protect our salvation by our own effort.

John's opinion was that whether or not we can achieve perfect obedience in our walk with Christ has nothing to do with whether or not we try.

As we continue reading, John explains his impossible demands. While John insists that if we have fellowship with Christ we will not walk in darkness, he also says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*

We are commanded to obey and follow Jesus, but as humans we will continue to sin. In the middle of John's words on not sinning, he adds that *“...we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins....”* We are wonderfully blessed. We have a Master who commands us to follow Him, but forgives our errant efforts. He will not cast us out, but forgives us and loves us as His own.

Learn more about walking in the Light in a Bible study this week.
A message from your Iowa District West Education Committee

Third Sunday of Easter

1 John 1:1-2:2

1. Read these first verses of this letter. Also read the first verses of John's gospel (John 1:1-5). How are the introductions similar?
2. We're in the Easter season—the season of joy. What makes our joy complete? (vs. 4) Why was John joyful? (vs. 2-3)
3. Where do the words of vss. 8 and 9 appear in our worship service responses? Why are these words important?
4. Who only can take away your sins? What did He do to take away your sins? (see 1:7 and 2:2)

For Family Reflection

5. Read I John 2:1. Should we try not to sin? Can we stop sinning? What Good News does God have for us?
6. Many Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregations are part of an “Ablaze” emphasis to tell over 100 million people about our Jesus who has risen from the dead. Why is it important to tell others about Jesus? Who in your neighborhood or school or even your family can you tell?

Third Sunday of Easter

Revelation 5:1-14

Jesus once asked the twelve, “Who do you say that I am?” Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this incident in Jesus’ life. All report that Peter replied that Jesus is the Christ.

Who do we say that Jesus is—not only in our liturgy and prayers during worship on Sunday morning, but in our actions and priorities all week long? Is that Sunday morning proclamation reflected in who we are?

How was Jesus revealed to John in his vision? Jesus is the Lion and also the Lamb who was slain. Only He is worthy to take the heavenly book from the hand of His Father and open it. All the host of heaven fall down and worship Him. By His death He purchased people for God from every nation on earth. These will one day reign through all eternity. John says that myriads of heavenly beings shouted, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

Is that how we see our Lord? Or, do we think of Him only as the Savior who suffered and died and who grants us salvation and eternal life? He is all of that! But, do we see Him as more?

Jesus is the Lord of all. The One who holds our universe together and who was present and active in the creation of our world. When He was on our earth and walking the roads of Palestine, Jesus made a difference in every person He touched. Their lives were never the same after meeting Him. Think of the widow of Nain, with her resurrected son at her side; Mary and Martha reunited with Lazarus; the many blind who were healed. How about Matthew, who was transformed from a greedy tax assessor into a minister of God’s word? Or Simon the Zealot, who could live in peace with Matthew, his fellow apostle who, in the eyes of militant Jews, should have been assassinated. Has Jesus ceased to work in each of our lives every day because it is the twenty-first century? Of course not.

Jesus is our Lord of daily life, as well as Savior and provider of eternal life. John shows us the almighty Christ. His power, wisdom, love, and authority can literally change us day by day.

Learn more about Jesus’ unsurpassed glory in a Bible study this week.
A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee

Third Sunday of Easter

Revelation 5:1-14

1. What names for Jesus do we find in this chapter? What is the significance of each name? Which name is dominant? Why?
2. How is the sacrifice of the Lamb emphasized in this text? How is the Easter victory of the Lamb emphasized?
3. Worthiness is a theme of this chapter. Who is the worthy One? How is our unworthiness described in this text? Why are we worthy to stand in the presence of the Lamb?

For Family Reflection

4. Worship is a theme of this text. Who is always the object of worship? Will worship be a heavenly activity? What will worship be like in heaven?
5. Where do we find the mission emphasis in vs. 9? What will have to happen so that many tribes and languages will be part of the heavenly choir?
6. Does chorus of vs. 12 sound familiar? Where have you heard a similar song? Talk about the songs of our worship. Which songs are your favorite?

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:13-35

In this passage we find two followers of Jesus walking along the road. It had been an upside down week. The One whom they followed had been crucified. Now there were even reports that He might be back from the dead! Their conversation must have been intense that morning. As they talked and walked, Jesus Himself joined them. Amazingly, they did not recognize Him.

Many reasons have been explored as to why they might not have recognized Jesus, all of them pretty believable, but let's look at our own recognition of Jesus. We rejoice that the risen Lord comes to us in His Word and through His sacraments.

God is omnipresent (to use a big word from confirmation class). He is always present everywhere. It means that when Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always," He meant it literally. He is always at our side, in our being, leading us on. But, so often, we go through the day without a thought of Him. Not just when we're at the job or shopping for groceries, but even when we're discussing faith, or Sunday school lessons, or church programs. We just don't seem to stop to notice Jesus and what He has to say about all that goes on in our busy days. We tend to drift away from consulting Jesus, even though He is right there!

The disciples on the road finally came to recognize Jesus' presence. They were amazed and delighted when He revealed Himself to them at supper. Frequently, we also spend time talking and sharing different experiences with everyone but the Master—the One who is the most willing to share His time and wisdom with us. As we go through each day, trying to comprehend each experience—trying to decide how to proceed in the various areas of our lives, may we take the time to look closely and listen closely, so that we may more fully comprehend His presence with us.

Bible study is an integral part of understanding Jesus and His will for us. Please
join a Bible study group at your church!

A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee.

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:13-35

1. The events take place "that same day" (vs. 13). Skim the previous verses. What day is it? What had happened earlier that day?
2. The disciples were "downcast" (vs. 17). What was the reason for their sadness? Why didn't they recognize Jesus at this time? When did they recognize Him?
3. How does verse 27 show the connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament? What connects the Testaments?

For Family Reflection

4. "It is true!" (vs. 34) What does it mean to you and your family that the resurrection of Jesus is true?
5. When have you been sad? How does Jesus' resurrection change our sadness into joy?
6. Based on the comment on the disciples "Were not our hearts burning within us" (Luke 24:32), The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has organized the "Ablaze" movement. How has your church emphasized this mission opportunity?

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:36-49

Just prior to the events in today's passage, on the day of the Resurrection, two disciples headed out from Jerusalem for Emmaus. During their walk and discussion a stranger joined them. They told the stranger all about Jesus and while eating bread with him, they suddenly realized that this man really was Jesus. He then disappeared from their sight. These two were close to Jesus and knew where to find the other disciples and headed there immediately.

As the two were telling their story, Jesus appeared in the midst of the gathering. In order to reassure them and show that He was not a ghost, Jesus requested and ate a broiled fish.

By these appearances and others, Jesus assured His disciples then, and assures us now, of the basic and absolute doctrine of all Christianity. He was raised from the dead. He was not raised as a spirit, as some believe. He was not a radical caught in the web of Roman intrigue as others suggest. His miracles were not embellishments created by His followers to express their own beliefs. Jesus really said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

After reassuring His overwhelmed followers, Jesus explained to them the prophecies of the Bible and His teachings. He promised them the power to be His witnesses to the world in which they lived. Far from bringing His mission to an end, Jesus commanded His followers to spread the Gospel to all the world.

They did their job well. Less than twenty-five years later, an angry unbeliever in Thessalonica would complain, "These men *who have upset the world* have come here also." Are you upsetting the world with the love of Jesus and His message of salvation? We can't do it, but Jesus can do it through us. He sent the Holy Spirit to guide us and enable us. As Paul said, "I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) As we move out from Easter, it is our calling to spread the news of the empty tomb and the living Savior.

Let God's Word bless you in a special way this Easter season.

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:36-49

1. Why were the disciples "startled and frightened"? What assurance did Jesus bring?
2. What evidences do we have in this text that Jesus' resurrection was a real physical event? Why was it necessary to prove His physical presence?
3. According to vs. 44-46 what is the purpose of Scripture? What other purposes may people invent for the Bible?
4. According to vs. 47-48 what is to be done with the Good News of Jesus' resurrection? How are you sharing that Good News?

For Family Reflection

5. Have there been times when Jesus' greeting "Peace be with you" has been especially important to you? (Maybe now is one of those times) How does He bring His peace to you?
6. What proof do we have that Jesus is alive? Read 1 Corinthians 15 and celebrate the reality and power of Jesus' resurrection.

Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-19

What were the disciples doing out on the Lake of Galilee fishing? Why weren't they in Jerusalem getting Jesus' Church started? Why weren't they busy telling everyone about Jesus?

There were seven followers of Christ there that day. They had all been through a life-altering experience not too long before. They had seen Jesus, their Teacher and Leader for three years, arrested, tried, hung on a cross, and then resurrected. Like us, they believed in Jesus as the Messiah. He was their Savior. He had guaranteed their relationship with God for eternity. They understood that, just as we do. So, why were they fishing instead of preaching the gospel?

Just as we feel sometimes, the disciples weren't too sure of anything except Jesus' love for them. They had seen Him in the upper room after His resurrection and witnessed Thomas' doubt and reassurance. Life was beginning to calm down and make sense again. Perhaps Jesus would soon establish His kingdom and restore Israel to its rightful place in God's world. That would be glorious! That was about as far as their own vision would take them.

Jesus, however, had other plans, and He came to the shore of the lake to let them know that their lives in Him were only just beginning. His vision went far beyond anything that they thought they could do. In the coming years, these fishermen, and others, by the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, spread the gospel throughout the known world.

How is your vision for God's kingdom? Though most of us aren't pastors or professional church workers, we too have a part in God's vision for His world, but we don't realize what it might be. We know that Jesus loves us as we go about with our "fishing" each day. We look forward to an eternity with Him, but there is more. Jesus still invites us to sit on the shore with Him and hear about His vision concerning our place and our work in His kingdom. Don't be surprised if His will for you is beyond what you have ever envisioned on your own.

Have you invited a friend to attend a regular Bible study with you?

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-19

1. What's the significance of Jesus' appearances after His resurrection? (See also 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) Who were the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection in this text?
2. What was Peter's reaction to the miraculous catch of fish? Who is "the other disciple" (vs. 8)?
3. What did Jesus ask Peter in vs. 15-17? How many times did He question Peter's love? Is there any significance to the three questions and three answers?
4. What prophecy does Jesus share with Peter in vs. 18? Using a Bible dictionary or commentary explore the fulfillment of this prophecy.

For Family Reflection

5. If Jesus were to ask you "Do you love me?" what would be your answer? How can we show our love for Jesus?
6. Jesus says to us also "Follow me" (vs. 19). What does it mean for us to follow Jesus? When is it difficult to follow Jesus? What assurances do we have as we follow Him?