

John 21:1-14

“What are you going to do for an **encore**?” That was the question asked of a young man who was still in his **mid-twenties**. He had just discovered a **cure** for an illness which had afflicted a tribe in South America for decades. He was a **hero** and a **multimillionaire** at the age of **25**. The people who had worked with him for the past three years wondered if they’d ever **see** him again, or if he’d just take his millions and **retire**. After all, when you’ve reached the **peak** of your profession at such an early age, what do you do for an **encore**?

Let’s apply that thought to our Lord **Jesus**. Jesus did something which the world thought was **impossible** - He **rose** from the **dead**. His **resurrection** provided a **cure** for **sin** and **death**, because His resurrection made it possible for **all people** to have **forgiveness**, to be **at peace** with God, and to **live forever** in **heaven**. Interestingly enough, Jesus **didn’t** become a multimillionaire for what He did. Instead, He offered His **cure** as a **free gift** to **everyone** who would put their trust in **Him**. After accomplishing **everything** which the heavenly Father had given Him to **do**, what would Jesus do for an **encore**? Would He just **retire** - go into **seclusion** - and just **forget** about all the **problems** we face here on the earth? Would He look for a **new** set of friends, and take His place among the **movers** and **shakers** of the world? Those may have been some of the thoughts which His **disciples** had after Easter. But it didn’t take very long before they had **answers** to their questions. While they were out **fishing**, **Jesus** showed up. They were having some **problems** catching fish, so Jesus gave them **advice** on where they could **find** some fish - and He even served them **breakfast**. Obviously, the **risen** Lord hadn’t risen **so high** that He **forgot about** the challenges which His friends would encounter in their daily lives. Jesus didn’t leave them on their own, but rather, He **continued** to be their **friend**, their **companion**, and their **Savior**. That’s the point of our text for today. For an **encore**, Jesus **continues** to be **Our Wise and Caring Friend**.

Our text today takes us to the Sea of **Tiberias** - also known as the Sea of **Galilee**. Seven of Jesus’ disciples were there. At Peter’s invitation they had decided to go **fishing**. They had been out on the lake all night long, but with **no success**. They had caught **nothing**. Some time **later** a man on the shore shouted out to them, “*Boys, don’t you have **any fish**?*” That question must have **stung** a bit - after all **no** fisherman wants to admit that he hasn’t caught **anything** - let alone a bunch of **professional** fishermen. Nevertheless, they had to admit that in spite of all their hard work and expertise, they had come up with **nothing**.

The man called back, “*Throw your net on the **right side** of the boat and you will **find** some.*” The disciples didn’t know **who** was talking, but they still took His advice - advice which resulted in an **amazing** catch of fish. There were **so many** fish in their net, that they were unable to haul it in. That’s when **John** figured it out - it was **Jesus** who was giving them advice from the shore. **Peter** got so excited that he wrapped his outer garment around himself, and jumped into the water to **swim** the 100 yards to shore, in order to be able to be with the Lord as quickly as possible. The rest of the disciples **followed** in the boat, **towing** the net full of fish. When they reached the shore they saw that Jesus already had a **fire** of burning coals with **bread** and **fish** on it. He invited them to bring some of the **153** fish they had just **caught**, and to enjoy a nice **shore lunch** with Him.

What an **amazing** event. Jesus had risen from the dead - providing for all of their **spiritual needs**. But He also dearly cared about His disciples’ **physical** needs. He **showed** that care in a number of different ways. He wanted them to be **successful** in their livelihood - **fishing**. He was well aware of the **effort** they had put in, and their **shortcomings**. He gave them good **advice**, enabling them to land a catch of 153 fish. And He even prepared **breakfast** for them, providing them with some **physical nourishment** after a hard night of fishing. Jesus was their **Wise And Caring Friend**.

That’s a pretty good **encore**, isn’t it? After Jesus rose from the dead, He wanted His disciples to know that He wasn’t going to **leave** them to fend for **themselves**. He would **continue** to be their **Wise And Caring Friend**. That wisdom and care is also poured out on **us**. Jesus knows where we **live**, and where we **work** - He knows about our efforts to get an **education**, to raise a **family**, and to solve the knotty **problems** we encounter in life. The things which concern **us** are also things which concern **Him**. The same Jesus who stood 100 yards away from His disciples in our text, stands **right here** at our side, even when we’re not **aware** of it. When all of our efforts seem to be in **vain**, and Jesus **seems** to be a disinterested **stranger**, He’s still **right here** by our side. He doesn’t just **notice** what’s going on in our lives, He deeply **cares**. And along with His **care**, Jesus also provides the **answers** to our questions, and the **solutions** to our problems. He is **Our Wise And Caring Friend**.

When Jesus looks into our lives and sees our **sins** - our **anger** and **resentment** - our love of **money** - our inappropriate and hurtful **words** - when He sees how we put our trust in our **own** wisdom and strength, rather than putting our trust in **Him** when troubles come - He **cares**, and He **knows** what needs to be **done**. Jesus also knows that we have **nothing** to give to God to **make up** for our

sins, and to **rid** ourselves of all the **guilt** and **shame** and **punishment**. So He took all of those things on **Himself**, to set us **free**. Jesus said, *“No one has greater love than **this**: that someone **lays down his life** for his **friends**.”* And Jesus actually took that even a step **farther**, because the Bible tells us: *“God shows his own love for us in **this**: While we were **still sinners**, Christ died for us.”* Jesus suffered unthinkable **torments**, and even died on a **cross**, to pay for the sins of His **enemies**. And then on the third day He **rose** again as our **friend** - a friend who **healed** the **wounds** caused by our sins, and who brought **peace** between **us** and **God**. He is **Our Wise And Caring Friend**.

So, we need to **understand** that even when it **seems** like everything is going **wrong**, and it **seems** like Jesus doesn't **care**, He **does** care. He **always** has our **best interests** at heart - even when He temporarily **withholds** a blessing from us. Jesus is **always** guiding and directing things for our **good**, as Paul told the Philippians, *“My God will fully supply your **every need**, according to his glorious **riches** in Christ **Jesus**.”*

Let's go back to our text for a moment. Everything seemed to be going **haywire** for the disciples. But Jesus gave them wise **advice**, and He **blessed** them with a catch of 153 fish. The same wise Lord is with us **too**, directing us to be in the **right** place at the **right** time - providing the **remedy** which meets our needs. Jesus is **Our Wise And Caring Friend**.

Isn't it **interesting** that in our text the solution to catching fish wasn't in using the proper **tackle**, or providing the correct **bait**, or even in having their **boat** in the right **spot**? Everything depended on **Jesus**. We can **learn** from that. In this congregation we have people with a wide variety of job skills and experience, as well as **educational** backgrounds and **wisdom**. But the blessings we receive from our work all come from **Jesus**. We've all heard the phrase, “Count your blessings.” In our text for today the disciples literally counted their blessings, and they came up with **153** - all **fish**. But they could also have counted their blessings and came up with **only one** - **Jesus** - because Jesus is the **source** of every blessing.

The same thing is true for **us** as well. All of our blessings come from **Jesus** - **Our Wise And Caring Friend**. He continues to bring us **physical** and **spiritual** blessings. In our text the disciples received good **advice**, a huge catch of **fish**, and **breakfast** with Jesus. Jesus provides **us** with advice in His **Word**, He takes care of **all** of our **physical** needs, and He enables us to receive **His body and blood** every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper. There is nothing Jesus would rather do than to be with **us**, and to **bless** us - and we're very **grateful** for that. Every time we sit

down to a meal, we **invite** Jesus to be **with** us and to **bless** us when we pray,
*“Come, Lord Jesus, be our **guest**, and let these gifts to us be **blessed**.”*

And that’s just what **Our Wise And Caring Friend** is doing for us **right now**. But He has **also** promised to take care of us **forever** in **heaven**. On the Last Day, Jesus will **come again**, and take us to be **with Him**, so we can enjoy an **eternal banquet**. He’s with us **now** in His Word and Sacraments to **feed** our faith, and keep it **strong** and **healthy**, so that after we have fought the good **fight** of faith, we will enjoy **eternity** with Him. May the lessons of our text encourage us to believe that Jesus **knows** about our challenges in life, and that He **cares** about us. May we always be **confident** that Jesus will richly provide everything we **need** in life. And may we always remember that Jesus is **with** us every step of the way, as we walk on the path which leads to **heaven**. May we always trust that **Our Wise And Caring Friend** will guide and protect us, until we **reach** that heavenly home. Amen.