

## **Easter 2: Epilogue – let's put on a fete!**

1 May 2022

High Street Uniting Church Frankston

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*Including celebrating baptism in the Contemporary service*

Read: **John 21:1-19**

*Lord God, when the drama of Easter and the flush of excitement and commissioning and hope become muted in the ordinary outworking of life, renew us in your love in our daily living. Amen.*

It's been a dramatic few weeks in our following of the story of Jesus. After all of his teaching about God reaching out to all of us with love, and his compassion and care for those who were considered outsiders, and his challenges to the establishment for the sake of loving kindness, and having entered Jerusalem triumphantly on a donkey, he ended up being the subject of a sham trial and crucified on what's now called Good Friday. And his disciples were shattered.

And then on the Sunday morning, his tomb was found empty, and he appeared – first to Mary, then to other disciples even as they were sheltering behind locked doors because they were still afraid. And Jesus commissions those same disciples to continue sharing the good news of God's forgiving love, the news that we are loved by God, and invited to share the eternal life of God; and invited to share that good news with the world – including through baptising people in the name of God who we know as loving heavenly Father, courageous compassionate Son, life-giving Holy Spirit.

John's gospel version of all of that dramatic time concludes at the end of chapter 20 with the words

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

And the book of John's gospel could have finished there.

But then there's another chapter, which is like an epilogue, a follow-up, a look at what happened later for the disciples, in which a few loose ends are tied up and a picture of life *after* that dramatic period is painted.

Peter says, “I'm going fishing” – going back to a familiar activity, going to gather some food for everyone. I'm not sure if it's relaxing or if it's distracting, but it's part of the life of Peter and the disciples - at least some of them - and they go to it.

With a little poetic licence....

Here at High Street Uniting, after all of the lockdowns of the last two years, and after the rush of Easter and hearing Jesus' commission to live in faith and love and learning from God's Spirit, **Marg Scarlett says, "I'm going fishing"**. Actually, she doesn't say that, she says: **"I'm going to put on a fete!"** It's familiar, and it's good for all of us, and it'll help us gather some funds and it'll be relaxing or distracting or a fun part of community life, at least!

And some of the disciples, notably Dawn and Graeme, Karin, Robert, Bronwen, Beryl and Irene say, "we're coming with you!" And so they hop into the hall and cast out their sewn goods, their jams and their cakes... And they're there all night, but no-one comes, possibly because people don't come to fetes at night.

And then, as the dawn is breaking, a voice calls out, "cast your guesses at the number of lollies in the jar over the other side of the foyer", and soon there are 153 guesses and the hall is bulging, not just because of the build-up of several years' worth of pre-loved treasures.

And in the midst of that, one of the disciples recognises Jesus. Or maybe someone amongst the people who come to the fete recognises the signs of Jesus in the midst of the disciples at work.

So let me pull a few ideas from this story that might speak to the way we run the fete and, indeed, our lives, after encountering Jesus' resurrection, and recognising God's love for us, and hearing God's call for us to be continue sharing the good news.

Firstly, Doing something like the fete, or going fishing, or sharing an activity with some friends is good. Not all of the disciples went to the fishing, and not everyone enjoys the same things, but Jesus certainly didn't chastise Peter and the disciples for going fishing – far from it – and there end up being ways in which Jesus brings blessing in and through regular activities.

Secondly, sometimes you don't catch any fish. It seems sad that this should be so, especially for Jesus' faithful disciples. But even when there are no fish, it doesn't mean that God is finished with us.

Thirdly, Jesus doesn't come with a fanfare, but with love and grace, and perhaps a quiet word from the shore to consider another way. Sometimes we can experience that in a sense of God saying "I love you" or "I've got you", and sometimes we have to practice being quiet enough to hear that, and reminding ourselves of the passages in the Bible that reassure us of that.

Fourthly, People don't always recognise Jesus. In the story we heard, it was the disciple who had been close to Jesus who recognised him. Keeping close to Jesus, even through regular practices of daily time with him in praying or reading the Bible, all helps.

Fifthly, In the story we heard, Peter rushes to Jesus – that’s Peter’s personality; the others come as they are able. What they all find is that Jesus welcomes them, and that actually it’s Jesus who provides the hospitality; it’s Jesus who serves them. We are served by Jesus, which is startling, and which calls for humility and thanks. In like fashion, Jesus calls us to be not soldiers but servants, and serve one another.

If you can see the screen, here’s a painting of the scene by Mike Moyers. If you can’t see it, let me say at least that this is a painting of daybreak, in oranges and grey blues, with the sun coming over the distant horizon and being reflected on the surface of the waters of the lake through the middle third of the picture, with an empty boat pulled up to shore and a small, intimate circle of people silhouetted around a fire. There’s something in this depiction about the majesty of morning within which there’s this circle of fellowship, with a ‘communion of grace’ taking place (in the artist’s words).

To me, this picture is a reminder of the awesome wonder of God in both the big scale, the sunrise; and the small, the breakfast fire.

The fete next week is an example of an activity with which we’re familiar, set in this great environment, and enabling conversations of welcome and grace. In sharing in the fete, there is a giving and receiving of hospitality; there are opportunities to affirm that all who come bear the image of God; there are opportunities to serve one another and to be served. The most significant moments and conversations probably won’t involve fanfare, but the nudge of God’s spirit to greet someone, and the sharing of grace over morning tea.

After the drama of Easter, in the epilogue of life in communion with God, may Christ continue to nourish us in Word and Spirit so that we may know the fruit of his love in our living.

To the glory of God.