

April 18, 2010 (3rd Sunday of Easter)

GOSPEL John 21:1-19

Lord let our hearts be good soil. Open them, and till them, and plant your word in us. Water it that it might grow. May we become the people that you see. May we become the people that you call us - Your Children. Amen

I used this text Thursday night on campus. Before I got started, there was a question. It's a good question and I thought maybe I should answer it this morning. There's that very strange verse where Peter is in the boat and it says that when he heard that it was the Lord he put on his clothes and jumped into the water and swam ashore. Anyone who knows anything about swimming and water and lifesaving and stuff thinks that this is very weird because you always take your clothes off to get into the water to swim because it's easier to swim that way. And what were they doing naked in the boat anyway? And the students wanted to know what is this all about? The obvious answer is that you're fishermen and you don't work in the boat - today we put on rubber "things" right? Professional fishermen put on things to keep themselves clean. In that day you would take your clothes off and set them aside so that then when you were done working the fish you could get back on the beach, scrub all of that slimy stuff off you, and then put your clothes back on. That's the obvious answer. On the other hand, John doesn't say anything if it doesn't mean something. Everything is very symbolic in John. And the gospel of John starts off with the words "In the beginning---", which makes us think about Genesis. And in the beginning God created ----. Here at the end of John I think that John is reminding us again to go back and think about Genesis, and the fall story. All of a sudden Adam and Eve knew they were naked and God came looking for them in the garden and they hid and they were trying to make clothes out of leaves to hide themselves. So when Peter hears that it is the Lord has a confused response. On the one hand he puts his clothes on, but on the other hand, instead of hiding, he can't wait to get to shore. And he jumps into the water and swims in to be the first one there. So that's sort of my answer to the good question that I thought I would share with you. (This is not my sermon.)

Are you ready to start? That wasn't bad, was it? It was a good question from the kids and it needed to be answered.

Who's got spring fever? How many of you have had a break this spring of some sort? Yeah. Spring break was just a killer this year, wasn't it? Because it came, it had been ugly, cold, wet, a long winter, and then there was spring break. And you know, it wasn't bad. And some of us got to go where it was really nice. And then you come back, and it was gorgeous. And it's been gorgeous ever since. And it's like, we don't want to go back. We don't want to go back to that - to stay inside. Let's just stay outside. And it's a problem. It's made Spring Fever a whole lot harder to deal with because it just came all at once. But somewhere along the line you have to go back to class. Either as Shelley, because she's got kids waiting on her, or as students because the semester is coming to the end and you know, I've got to get a grade at some point. On the other hand, some of us have jobs. And that's not any easier, necessarily, but you have to go do that to get paid. I got to thinking that all of this a bit like, you know, we all have day jobs, most of us have day jobs, if we're blessed enough to have a job. And there's also this thing that a lot of us do and there seems to be this American Dream of moon lighting, of having a little something on the side. This is what I really love to do. I do that, and I tinker with that and I goof around with it, whatever it might be. And if you're really lucky, it can turn into your day job. Kathy and I worked for a couple for awhile in Kansas City. Tim had been an

engineer. I mean, serious, major, national company. He was designing piping, cooling systems for power plants. His wife loved crafts. All of a sudden they had five gift stores between Topeka and Kansas City, and one in St. Louis. And he gave up the engineer job because this was really fun. We have a job of our own now. We're doing what we love. Our moonlighting turned into something. The problem with moonlighting is that sometimes those things don't turn out and you have to go back to your day job. And that's not always a happy prospect.

So here's Peter, sitting on the beach, waiting for Jesus to show up, and my favorite Bible verse in all the Bible (it actually was stenciled on a handmade fishing rod I had once upon a time) - John 21:3. "I'm going fishing." Just the first part of the verse, not the last part where it says that they didn't catch anything, just the first part, you understand. But that's different for Peter than it does for us. For us, when I say that I'm going fishing, it means that I'm taking some time off, I'm going to go down by the lake, and I'm going to waste some hours having a little fun. I might take a cooler with a sandwich and a carbonated green beverage, you know. I'm going to go relax. For Peter, who is a professional fisherman, it meant going back to his day job. It meant that the moonlighting they'd been doing for three years with Jesus just wasn't working out. And it's time to go back to work. Jesus doesn't leave it at that. He comes back after that fruitless night. And he's got a fire there on the beach and the fish are already cooking. And he says (as many people would do, sometimes when you're in the boat, right on top of them, you can't see them, you know) "Try the other side, right there. That's where they are." And then they recognize who Jesus is. And Jesus calls Peter back to his moonlighting job. "Feed my lambs." "Tend my sheep."

Now this other guy in this other story (Acts 9: 1-20), and I'm not talking about Saul. I'm talking about Ananias. He's got a day job of some sort. We don't know what it is. But he's also been moonlighting. It says that he's a disciple. And God comes to him, and this is just classic call story like the prophets out of the Old Testament. "Ananias." "Here I am, Lord." Sounds just like Samuel's call. "Go and do this for me." And there's, just like so many other prophets, "I'm not so certain that's such a good idea, God." Moses - "You k-k-know I d-d-don't s-s-speak all that well. Are you s-s-sure you want m-m-me to go do that?" Jeremiah - "They're not going to pay any attention to me. I'm just a kid." Jonah - "Oh yeah, sure, see ya' God." And yet, he goes on this little moonlighting task that might cost him everything. And he makes that investment and look at what comes out of it. This is Saul, the one who takes the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Sometimes we might feel like Ananias and sometimes we might feel a bit like Peter. The day job is really what we need to pay attention to. But God keeps calling us back to the moonlighting. I thought of the old hymn - "If you can't speak like angels, if you can't preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, you can say He died for all". Here I am, send me. Send me. Amen.