

## Arise: Discipleship

### John 21:1-7

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In June of 2007, when the original iPhone was first launched, it came with several built-in applications that Apple predetermined and preinstalled like Phone, Weather, Notes, Calendar, Photos, and Calculator. They told you what you needed – and wanted. How prehistoric. No Chat. No maps. No navigation. A lame camera. And it needed to be connected to your computer to set it up. What a dinosaur. And we loved it. But here's the deal: we didn't know what we didn't know. As mind-bogglingly excellent as back then, the iPhone was still only loaded with several software applications predetermined and preinstalled by Apple. But the revolution was about to explode.

Within months, Apple would essentially begin casting their nets from the other side of the boat as disciples would take the new technology to new places. Apple announced that developers would be able to create “apps” or applications that would work seamlessly with the iPhone. So the consumer (you and I) would no longer be limited to what Apple predetermined and preinstalled. Instead, third-party applications would extend iPhone's capabilities without compromising its reliability or security. And one year later, when the iPhone launched in 2008, Steve Jobs introduced the App Store. And from that moment on, those who embraced the new technology, tech disciples, were fishing off the other side of the boat. Suddenly, in our tackle box were things like Copy and Paste, a front camera, video recording, flashlight, Photo messaging, GPS, Home screen wallpapers, Siri, Touch ID, Face ID, and wireless charging. Like an ancient Rabbi we know, Steve Jobs gathered a community of disciples together. He set them free from old models and outdated, worn-out, limited ways of thinking and doing things. He invited them to see everything from a different angle, a different perspective, and go in an entirely new direction, leading to a completely new way of living life.

We're continuing our series that we're calling “Arise!”

In this Easter season, we're giving intentional and practical attention to how the resurrection of Jesus Christ reframes everything – including how we live together in the community of faith. We're giving specific attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in us, through us, what it means to be the connecting church, why fellowship is so important, how we worship, and how we practice stewardship.

All of this is baked into our identity as a faith community is our call to connect, which is expressed in our vision statement – that Prince of Peace will be known as the connecting church, working collaboratively with schools, churches, local government, campus partners, organizations like the Salvation Army, Campus Faith Clubs, Second Harvest, and partners in the business community, providing hope and wholeness to all people, with a specific focus on children, seniors and people in poverty in the south metro area because we know that we're more together than we are apart, we're stronger as a community than we are as individuals.

This week we're focusing on Discipleship – what it means to be disciples who practice Discipleship. There are two essential questions that each of us gets to ask every day; questions of identity and questions of purpose. The identity question is, “Who am I?” The purpose question is, “What am I doing here?” Jesus wanted his disciples of every age and time to be able to answer those two questions. Our responses largely depend on understanding what it means to follow the Rabbi Jesus, do the things that Jesus did, think what he thought about, be moved by the things that moved him, and be his hands and feet in the world.

The Gospel of John features a fascinating story and gives us a clear insight into what it will mean to be Disciples of Jesus for the next generation – John 21:1-7:

*Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time at the Tiberias Sea (the Sea of Galilee). This is how he did it: Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed “Twin”), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the brothers Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. Simon Peter announced, “I’m going fishing.” The rest of them replied, “We’re going with you.” They went out and got in the boat. They caught nothing that night. When the sun came up, Jesus was standing on the beach, but they didn’t recognize him. Jesus spoke to them: “Good morning!*

*Did you catch anything for breakfast?" They answered, "No." He said, "Throw the net off the right side of the boat and see what happens." They did what he said. Suddenly, there were so many fish in it that they weren't strong enough to pull it in. Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Master!"*

A couple of things going on here have a lot to teach us about living in the new reality of the resurrection.

First, notice how easy it is to snap back to what is familiar. Jesus has been crucified and resurrected. That changes everything. Here, in what appears to be mere hours after the horror of the several previous days, the disciples return to what they'd always done. They defaulted to their old ways of life, old habits, rhythms, and patterns. They returned to what was familiar, known, measurable, and safe.

"I'm going fishing," Peter said, and you could almost hear the resignation in his voice. "We'll go with you," the others respond with equal apathy. They fish all night and get skunked. The following day Jesus stands on the beach, asking them if they've gotten anything. "Nope, nothing..." they reply. They're describing their current reality.

Second, notice how Jesus' resurrection calls us followers to go in a new direction. Jesus knows he's talking to fishers, so he does some casting himself. Jesus challenges them to go in a new direction. "Throw your nets on the other side of the boat, and you'll find some," he says. The other side? That's six, maybe ten feet away, right? What possible difference would that make? But the disciples agree to trust this guy calling out to them from the beach. So they do it – they make the change, they throw the net out on the other side of the boat, and everything changes. The difference between where we are at the moment and where Jesus wants to take us is where resurrection happens. Our current reality is often where we are stuck in what's familiar, known, measurable, and safe. But Jesus enters that resurrected space and urges us to try something completely new. Resurrection invites us into the Discipleship of the unknown, unfamiliar, and immeasurable.

One of the most vivid descriptions of Discipleship comes from the 16th century Saint Teresa of Avila, who lived in an age of exploration and political, social, and religious upheaval. It was a time of turmoil and reform, which sounds somewhat familiar. But Teresa of Avila was a disciple to the core and spent her life equipping other disciples for Discipleship. She famously

described the identity of disciples and the purpose of Discipleship. She wrote, "You are the presence of Christ in the world—who has no body now but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours—yours are the eyes through which Christ looks with compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which Jesus walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which God blesses all the world." That's all about identity. Knowing who we are and whose we are. We never have to question that.

But the purpose question follows for every disciple: "What are you doing here?" Humankind's search for meaning has always led to the purpose question. And that, too, is very complicated. Again, from Teresa of Avila: "You are here to reach across the gap – across the chasm into the life of someone in need. You are here to be the hands, the feet, the eyes—the body of Christ because Christ has no body now on earth but yours." When Jesus challenged the disciples to throw their nets off the other side of the boat, it wasn't so much that it was six to ten feet away. He challenged the disciples to see everything from a new perspective, from a resurrection perspective, where disciples have the stone of limitations rolled away.

Jesus asks them to imagine a new way of being disciples, new ways of doing Discipleship, and new ways of imagining the church.

I mean, just imagine...

- Imagine a church – a faith community whose disciples are free to brainstorm ministry ideas, following them through trial and error, developing them into full-fledged disciple-making opportunities.
- Imagine the Mega Sale – where would the Mega Sale have been over its 29-year-long history if just a handful of volunteer disciples had tried to manage that whole enterprise?
- Imagine Mission Outpost without scores of volunteer disciples with a passion for serving others.
- Imagine a Dental Clinic without 10-12 volunteer disciples posing as dentists and 6-8 hygienists willing to volunteer their time and expertise.
- Imagine celebrating baptisms on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings without the thousands of tiny white baptism napkins that a volunteer disciple painstakingly and lovingly creates.
- Imagine celebrating communion without the faithful, committed disciples who prepare wafers and tiny cups of wine, the body, and the blood of Christ.

- Imagine walking into the Community Room and not being able to appreciate the artwork created by volunteer disciples who have a gift and wish to share that with all who come into that space.
- Imagine ... all the people, all those volunteer disciples.

Today I want you to hear from a couple of disciples who are throwing their nets off the other side of the boat. These disciples – Emily Hammerstrom and Terry Keiffer – understand that what they do when they serve expresses their commitment to Discipleship. So let's take a look.

(VIDEO OF EMILY AND TERRY)

Thanks to Emily and Terry, whose Discipleship stories inspire countless others to throw their nets in a new direction!

An ancient Rabbi named Jesus is still gathering a community of disciples together. He is setting them free from old models and outdated, worn-out, limited ways of thinking and doing things. He invites you to see everything from a different angle, a different perspective, and go in an entirely new direction, leading to a completely new way of living life.

Friends, I want to challenge you to throw your net off the other side of this boat that we call Prince of Peace. It will mean doing things in an entirely new way. And doing that will probably take the power of a resurrected Jesus living through you. Are you ready?