

# "Gone Fishin'"

Acts 9:1-20 & John 21:1-19

April 22, 2007

Wouldn't you just love to forget about all of the cares of your life and just go fishin'? Of course, I know that fishing isn't for everyone - but I suspect that we all have some treasured activity that gives us a lot of joy and peace. I think of Peter sitting around with some of his friends. Life had been more than hectic - it had been down right crazy - - difficult, dangerous. I can imagine him sitting around with some of the other disciples fretting about everything that had been going on ... all of the stuff beginning with waving palm branches, last suppers and foot washing, prayers in a garden, an arrest of his best friend than the trial and his denial, a crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Now that is a heavy week and a half. They have made their way north to the Sea of Galilee and now there is nothing to do but think about it all. After a while, wouldn't you want to do something - wouldn't you want to just relax and forget about everything - maybe a little fishing would bring healing to the soul?

I am sure that many of you will have much better fish stories than I could ever share. I have some good ones. I wouldn't even tell you about the infamous 'one that got away'. But I could tell you at length of fishing in SE Alaska and standing beside the stream where the salmon were 'running' so thick that you could almost pick out the one you wanted and drop your line in front of it. The peaceful beauty of the setting added to the joy. There were the 3 little black bear cubs climbing in the trees across the river, their mother doing some fishing of her own down stream, a heard of deer crossing up stream and several Bald Eagles soaring overhead. It was incredible! Or I could tell you of trying my hand at halibut fishing in a little bay nearby. The halibut were small in the bay. I let down my line and bobbed it off the bottom, frequently snagging a sea anonyne or getting caught in other things on the bottom. I thought, at one point that I must have snagged an old tire or some disgusting debris on the bottom - it was slow and heavy dragging it up from the depths but I know that I had to get my line free if I had any hope of catching something. So I kept reeling it in .... until it was about 5 feet below the surface .... than that relatively small halibut [about 30 pounds] took off heading straight down. I could tell you the full version of th0e story - but it is enough to say, it was exhilarating ... and fun .... and in some sense it was really kind of healing. I can imagine that Peter was looking for that kind of healing after going through the kind of trauma that he and the other disciples had endured. So Peter went fishing. The rest of the disciples that were with him went too. They caught absolutely nothing even though they were there all night. Some would suggest that it really did not matter - there is joy and perhaps some healing in just being out there. By morning, I am sure that they were tired and ready to quit. But, you know the story. There in the early morning light they would be involved in a fish story that would be told an

retold through the centuries that followed. In one dip of the net - 153 fish! What a joy it must have been. But in an instant, Peter was willing to leave the fish behind, jump into the sea and swim to the one who stood on the shore.

I suspect that we could say a lot about this little fish story but I keep thinking about the situation more than the fishing. How difficult it must have been for those disciples to struggle with what had gone on in their world. How do you make sense of a world that seems to have been turned up side down? Where do you find answers? Where do you find peace, hope or even joy again? Peter decided to go fishing. And what about us? Our world seems to be filled so often with questions, struggles, pain and the like. How do we deal with it? Where do we turn to find some peace in life when we walk through the dark moments of our lives?

I found myself thinking about our first scripture reading for today with Saul "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord". It seems as though there has always been a great deal of darkness in our world. This week the news has been filled with reports of violence and death that came to the Virginia Tech college campus. Such darkness overwhelms us and our heartfelt prayers go out to those who suffer. But even if we don't focus on such national tragedy we can find plenty of darkness that touches our individual lives. And we must ask how we deal with such things. To say that we should all go fishing just will not do it.

I read an article this week that talked about the Virginia Tech event. It talked about the spontaneous turn toward God that happened. Part of the article was so good, I'd like to read it to you. *The secularist authorities are in a predicament. On campuses across the country some cynical professors relish the opportunity to ridicule students who believe in the "hocus pocus" of souls and the "fairytale" of God. Recently Harvard Professor Steven Pinker protested loudly at the suggestion that a "reason and faith" component be included as part of the curriculum standards: "Universities are about reason, pure and simple," he trumpeted. "Faith—believing something without good reasons to do so—has no place in anything but a religious institution, and our society has no shortage of these.*

*The smug materialists would do well to stop scoffing, and face the fact that their worldview fails to give adequate answers to those such as the students and families at Virginia Tech facing horrific loss. The same faith that is mocked in philosophy, English and science classes too often in secular classrooms is exactly what everybody turns to when faced with the problem of evil.*

*..... they sang, Amazing Grace. at the convocation service at Virginia Tech Tuesday. .... During the ceremony..... thousands of students stood to recite the Lord's prayer in unison. The question, "What is the meaning of this suffering?" seeks an ultimate answer—an answer from God. As it always does, the secular yielded to the sacred to make sense of suffering and evil. .... There were no belittling giggles or rolled eyes in the crowd of thousands of students and teachers—no clever objections to the reality of the soul at the candlelight vigils held around campus. On everybody's lips was "the victims and their families are in my prayers," and "I thank God that I was saved." Students, families and our national community have come together*

***before God this week—praying in solidarity for comfort from a benevolent maker.***

***After September 11 the churches of America were filled to the brim for a reason. Following the massacre at Virginia Tech people again turn to God for answers. {from - tothesource 4/18/2007}***

**Peter was beside himself with questions, fears and pain. So he went fishing. But he knew that even 153 fish did not have the answers that he could only find at the feet of Jesus. Where will you turn?**

**AMEN**