

Christ in the Ordinary
John 21:1–14
Sunday, April 19, 2026 (Easter 3)

Let us pray: Raise up your Word in us, Lord, that it might lead us to new life, in Christ. Amen.

Years ago I was out fishing with my cousin. We walked across a field to this farm pond, one of my absolute favorite places in the world. My cousin walked around to the far side of the pond and started fishing there. I decided to take a minute, because it was so beautiful and peaceful, and I read a morning devotion before I started. And it was *this* scripture passage from John's gospel. *Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. He said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.*

I sat there and thought about it for a few minutes while I started getting my line ready. When I was done, I cast my line out into the pond, and as I was reeling it in, a fish bit. Good start to the day! I brought it in, cast out again, and *another* fish bit. Brought it in, and cast out a couple more times, when a *third* fish bit! My cousin on the other side of the pond, who still hadn't caught anything yet, had seen me reading earlier, and he called out, "What were you reading over there?! Maybe I need to take a look at that!" I think that by the end of the morning, I had caught six or seven fish, and he didn't catch anything (and he's a *much* better fisherman than I am).

Now, there's nothing *special* about that story. I don't think that I caught all those fish because I read this scripture right before. If that had been the case, it would have worked every *other* time I went fishing after that, because I *did* try it again (just to make sure)! But that's just how fishing goes. Sometimes you

don't catch anything, and sometimes you get lucky. There was nothing *magical* about it for me. It's just an ordinary story of an ordinary experience. And that's the point.

This story from John is a story of the resurrected Christ appearing to his disciples! And it is very *ordinary*. Look at how it starts. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two other disciples are just hanging out. It doesn't even say what they're doing; they're just *together*. Not doing anything noteworthy. Peter says, "I'm going fishing." They say, "We will go with you." This is not the kind of thing you expect from a group of people who have just seen their resurrected Lord two other times before this. That seems like it would change *everything* about how you live your life, but *this* seems like they've just gone back to their ordinary lives. Like nothing had ever happened.

They don't catch anything all night. In the morning, some guy standing on the shore calls out to them, "You haven't caught anything, have you?" *No, thanks for pointing that out.* He says, "Cast your net out on the *other* side of the boat, and you will." Ordinary. He's not giving them magical instructions on what to do. He's just saying, "Try it over there." I can't tell you how many times I've said the same thing when I'm out fishing. "Let's try a different spot." It is all very *ordinary*.

So they *do* try the other side, and they catch 153 fish. That's pretty amazing, but let's be honest, as far as *miracles* go, that's pretty ordinary. No walking on water. No healing the sick or casting out demons. They just catch a bunch of fish. John says to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Peter hears that, it says that he puts some clothes on, for he was naked. I don't know if that was Peter's ordinary behavior or not, but it feels like a very ordinary detail to mention. There's really no *reason* for it. It's just very matter-of-fact.

When they get to the shore, they see a charcoal fire with fish on it and some bread. We're going to talk about the charcoal fire next week, but for right now, this is all very ordinary. Jesus gives them some

bread and some fish, and they sit down and have breakfast with him. And that's the end of the story. Nothing extraordinary, except for the fact that the one doing all of this is the Son of God who *was dead* and is now *alive*. Aside from that, there is nothing terribly remarkable about this story.

Not like *last week* when the disciples are all together in a locked room, and somehow Jesus suddenly *appears* in that locked room, shows them the wounds of the crucifixion in his hands and his side, breathes on them, and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit. That is not ordinary. It's pretty *extraordinary*! Or before that, when the women come to the tomb, and the huge stone that had sealed the tomb was somehow rolled away, and there is an earthquake, and an angel descends and tells them that Jesus has risen from the dead. That's pretty *extraordinary*! But *this* is just an ordinary story of an ordinary experience.

Why do we *have* this story? What is the point of including this in scripture? *Because the risen Christ does not just show up in the big, impressive, spectacular events in our lives. He shows up in the normal, ordinary, everyday moments.*

Think about what happens here. The disciples are doing something perfectly ordinary. Fishing. But in the midst of that, *they listen to Jesus and do what he calls them to do*, and that changes everything. Following Jesus isn't about big, heroic, miraculous acts. It *can* be, but most of the time it's not. It's about how we *listen to him and do what he calls us to do* in the small, simple, everyday, ordinary moments in life.

Just this past week, I have found Christ to be risen and at work in hospital rooms...

In phone calls...

In text messages...

In conversations in my office; and not conversations about anything particularly *big*, just ordinary conversations...

In a Zoom meeting...

In the gym at the YMCA...

At the rock garden by Handel's...

At a dinner in the Fellowship Hall...

In a car ride...

And on my front porch.

Nothing big or miraculous. Just ordinary, everyday moments in life, where I have *noticed* something or *felt* something or heard God saying something. Moments where I have seen forgiveness and acceptance and letting go and holding on. Moments where I have seen beautiful expressions of love and compassion. Moments where I am just going about my ordinary life, and I listen to Jesus and do what he calls me to do, and *that* makes the ordinary *extraordinary*.

Christ is *alive* and *at work* in all the ordinary moments of our lives. We just have to look for him, listen to him, and follow him. If that can happen to people while they are fishing and eating breakfast, then it can happen to *us* around the dinner table, on the train, at the grocery store, at a doctor's appointment, at a sports field, working in the yard, sewing/knitting/weaving, on a walk or bike ride, and in a classroom. It can even happen when you are sitting at home alone, watching TV. Because, like poet [Gerard Manley Hopkins](#) wrote, "Christ plays in ten thousand places." Not just churches on a Sunday morning. We can't just look for him in the big, spectacular moments. We have to look for him in the small, simple, ordinary moments of our everyday lives. Jesus uses ordinary people and ordinary moments to do extraordinary things.

A few days ago, I was just sitting around, watching a Phillies game, scrolling on social media (just an ordinary, boring moment), when I came across a post that said this: "Consumerism has turned the church into a service provider. People say, 'I want good preaching! I want amazing worship! I want great kids' programs!' Would we go to church if it was just a bunch of ragamuffin Jesus-followers gathering around a table, trying to love God and love neighbors?" And in that ordinary, boring moment, I heard Jesus speaking in that.

We have been so conditioned into thinking that, in order for something to be *good* or *meaningful*, it has to be *big* and *spectacular*. We have to be *wowed*. There are churches with thousands of people, with music and lighting that would rival a rock concert, or enormous, ornate cathedral sanctuaries. And don't get me wrong, there are good things in all of that. God can use that.

But what if *this* is all it needs to be? Just a bunch of ordinary people living their ordinary lives together, sitting around folding tables, sharing a meal or a cup of coffee, laughing and crying together, talking about their joys and their concerns, their families and their jobs, their hopes and their fears, trying to help

each other love and forgive and pray and understand scripture; ordinary people doing the best they can to follow Jesus, trying to figure out together how they can make a difference in the world. That's all this needs to be. God can *use* that. Jesus is *alive* in *that*. And that sounds pretty extraordinary to me.

Jesus Christ is alive and at work in this world, taking the ordinary moments of our ordinary lives and using them to do something *extraordinary* – to fix a broken world with love. Don't look for the spectacular. Don't wait to be wowed. Christ is right here, right in front of you, every moment of every day. And if we *look* for him and *listen* for him and open ourselves up to him, then *we* will be able to say, like John did, in all the ordinary moments of life, "It is the Lord!"