

Time Enough for Breakfast

John 21:1-14

The Third Sunday of Easter, April 10, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

There are many temptations to get us to think that we keep the church going. There is a classic phrase that the church is always one generation away from ceasing to exist. There is another phrase that says that the youth are the future of our congregation.

Such phrases have truth to them, but they also tempt us to falsehood. The church has the promise of her risen Lord that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Therefore it is impossible for the church to be one generation away from ceasing to exist because she has the promise of the One who rose from the dead that not even hell will be able to prevail against her.

The youth are the future of the congregation only in so far as they are the next generation that will replace us. But there is no guarantee that the youth will replace us. They may become apostate and leave the faith as some from our own generation have done. There are others who will turn to Jesus and be saved by the power of the Holy Spirit. There are also those who will remain faithful their entire lives. But since some leave and others enter one cannot say that this given youth are that given youth is the future of the congregation or of the church.

Jesus Christ and His return are the future of the Church. As the Scripture says we eagerly await a Savior from heaven who will save us from the wrath to come. So no matter what happens to our youth our congregation and the church have a future.

The One who rose from the dead is with the Church. He will not leave her nor forsake her.

There are also temptations to pride when it comes to the future of the church.

We like to assume that the future of the church is dependent upon us because that way we can take credit for her future. If someone starts attending the Divine Service because we invited them, we can take pride before God that we brought another sinner to Him, like God really needs us to bring sinners to Him, like He is not capable of doing that Himself, like the sinner that you brought to Divine Service actually came because of you. When God elects people unto salvation, He provides the means that bring them into contact with His Word. He will provide the blond girl that they like and so begin attending Divine Service with her. He will provide the opportunity, occasion and circumstances for them to receive your invitation to the Divine Service well. And if He does not provide you to invite them He will provide someone else. Even if you went through your entire life doing no evangelism whatsoever, God would still save His elect. He would still bring them to Divine Service.

But we like to believe that we are indispensable to God. We like to believe that He has to have us in order to save others. We like to believe that the future of the church is dependent on our evangelism efforts. We like to believe that God saves others by persuasion only and not by election that way we can take part in the persuading. We like to sing that the church waits for us and that we are the ones who will make her great, as if she is not great already simply because of her Lord.

Even at the national level we like to do this as Synodical Presidents and District Presidents roll out their latest effort to get The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod to grow. They each have their angle. They each have their plan. It is tempting to believe that these plans will save our Synod forgetting that our Synod already has a Savior. It is this guy who rose from the dead.

It is tempting even among ourselves when we don't like something that someone else is doing in the congregation to point to the results and say, "That isn't working." In other words someone is doing

something that we don't like, we like to complain to the elders or to pastor and say that so and so is doing something that does not produce results. In other words so and so is doing something that does not produce an obvious addition to the number of people who are attending the Divine Service. And sometimes you have complained about me. When it comes to me there is certainly plenty to complain about, but the problem is not with me or with anybody else. The problem is when a congregation assumes that her future is dependent upon the effort and output of her members.

Immanuel Lutheran Church is a great congregation. You want to know why she is a great congregation? She has a great Lord. You don't have to convince others to attend the Divine Service. In fact thinking that you have to convince others to attend the Divine Service means you have been ignoring what the Scriptures say about unbelievers and about the Church. Unbelievers don't want to attend Divine Service. Frankly, my flesh doesn't want to attend the Divine Service either. If I could think of some excuse to get around my vocation and not be here every once in a while I would do it. But my flesh is the damnation of myself. If I let my flesh get the best of me, I am lost.

And so we come to the Divine Service not because some member convinced us to do so. We attend the Divine Service because sinners in the face of a holy God do not have any other options. Here is the grace of God. Here is the forgiveness of our sins. Here is the presence of the holy God in our midst not to destroy, but to welcome us. Who in their right mind would want to miss that? Who in their right mind would put anything else ahead of that? Only the unbelievers would and we know what happens to them in the end.

I am pleased that you folks do not pester me too much about attendance. In the grand scheme of things Immanuel proceeds with more confidence than many rural congregations. And I do hope that is because you have put your trust in the One who rose from the dead. The One who rose from the dead is the head of our congregation. He has given us eternal life and our vocations to fulfill. All will be well no matter what happens and our congregation has a future even if she ceases to exist from a constitutional standpoint. In other words even if the building is sold and the congregation disbands, Immanuel still has a future. It is an eternal one with the Lord.

Therefore we do have time to rest. We have all the time in the world to rest. We could kill ourselves with programs and gimmicks with tricks of worship or programs of activity in order to try to ensure the future of our congregation and of Christ's Church, but if we do we are worshipping ourselves and there is no rest in that. There is only perpetual busyness looking for a result that will never come, lusting after the megachurches and wanting to imitate them little suspecting that many of them do not have the risen one as their Lord and so in spite of their size, they have no future. If we kill ourselves with programs and things to do for the kingdom of God there will no time to have breakfast. There will be no time to simply sit and enjoy the salvation that God has granted to us. He wants you to rest. He wants you to sit and enjoy His salvation. He wants you to savor it.

Jesus rose from the dead. He is the Lord of glory! He is the Lord of the living and the dead! All of the everlasting powers of creation are in His hands. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. He has the power to cast all of us into hell or welcome us all into everlasting life. He has the power to curse us with the everlasting fire and He has the power to grant us everlasting bliss. He has the power to inflict pain and torture. He has the power to heal and to wipe every tear from every face. He is the Lord of heaven and earth and He is standing on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius.

The disciples spot Him from the boat. They see Him on the shore. They have fished all night and have caught nothing. They have done their programs and put forth their effort. They have striven with nature and they have failed. They have caught nothing. That is what happens when you do things under

your own power and do not let the Lord do it. The Lord instructs them, "Cast your net on the right hand side of the boat." What difference will that make? The Sea of Tiberius is the Sea of Tiberius. It is not like the boat is on top of some kind of underwater wall that separates the right side of the boat from the left side of the boat. Water is water. Fish are fish. It should make no difference which side of the boat upon which they cast their nets and yet when they do so they have more fish than they know what to do with. And why were they successful? Because they did what the Lord told them to do. They did not come up with their own programs and their own agendas. They did not invent new fishing techniques to follow. They did what the Lord told them to do and they caught a whole bunch of fish. They caught more fish than they knew what to do with.

And so Jesus proves that He is the Lord. He is the Lord of the new creation. He rose from the dead and by rising from the dead, He has brought the new creation to us. He proves that He is the maker of a new heaven and a new earth by bringing forth a miraculous catch of fish. He shows what the creation is capable of now that He is risen from the dead. It is when our Lord lets the disciples see that He is the Lord of the new creation by the miraculous catch of fish that the disciples recognize the Lord. They recognize the Lord and they cannot wait to get to shore to see Him. Peter throws himself in the water to see Him. They want to see Him. Who would not want to see the One who rose from the dead?

They get to the shore and they meet Him.

Now understand this. These are the same disciples whom our Lord will send out to evangelize the entire world. He will tell them to make disciples of all nations by baptizing the nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them everything that the Lord taught them. These are the disciples who are apostles who will bring eternal life to a fallen world. They will work and slave for this Jesus in their vocations. They will die for Him.

But before all of that, before all of the preaching and the struggling and the dying, before all of the writing of the New Testament and the founding and organizing of congregations before the going and the preaching, Jesus meets them on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius and of all things that the Lord of heaven and earth could have said to them, of all that He could have instructed them, He tells them, "Come and have breakfast."

They sat and ate with Him. The new creation has come and there is always time to sit and eat with the Lord. Just as Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what He had to say and by doing so was not busy with Martha helping to prepare the meal, the disciples sit and eat with Jesus. They didn't even cook the meal. Jesus cooked it for them. He did the work so that they could rest.

There will be the converting of the nations. There will be the founding of the Church. There will be the fulfilling of your vocations. All of that is to come, but when it is coming know this: there with the Lord there is always time to sit and rest in His presence and have some breakfast.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.