May 8, 11 Mother's day John 21:1-14

# GONE FISHING

How difficult is it for you to wait for something? For one of our granddaughters she can't wait till the end of this month when she will be 16. She has been taking her student driving these last few weeks and hopes not only to get her license but also find a car. But she is not alone. Sami Benner is going to be getting her license and I'm sure there are others as well from this congregation that are either close to getting a license or are driving now. Then there are those who will be graduating this year. They can't wait to be free from school work. For some it will be until next year. For others it will be the end of that phase of their lives and then they will be out trying to find a job or entering the service. Some teachers might be waiting for the end of the school year as well because some will join the ranks of retirees. I know a couple of preacher friends joining the retired ranks on June 30th.

Waiting is tough stuff. Our son Jim and his wife Danette from Oklahoma had to live in a motel for these last few months because they weren't able to move their stuff when they moved to Oklahoma. The problem was lots of snow and ice and they lived on a hill. They took what they could just to get started. After Karen's wedding Danette drove to Boston and drove a good size U-Haul truck pulling her car from Boston to Oklahoma City. Now they are unpacking and beginning to settle down and enjoy their new life.

Many years ago when I was in my last year of seminary I was also waiting for graduation to come in May. But more importantly I was waiting to see where I would be pastoring. Since the New England Conference had no place for me, I didn't know where I would be going. I knew God had a plan for me and a place to pastor. While many of my friends were talking about where they were going I was still without a church. I did interview with South Alabama and Florida, but I didn't pursue it. Finally after waiting a

long time I did hear from Illinois and I was invited to come to Springfield in April of 1983 to speak to those in the Springfield district. And as they say, the rest is history.

Waiting is tough. Ask a woman who is pregnant and the baby is late or having a tough pregnancy. Ask someone who doesn't have a job about waiting. Many have applied for work but some aren't hiring, or some are over qualified, or under qualified. People with lots of education are not able to find work. The other night an older man with college having lost his high paying job is still waiting to be hired after 2 years of interviews and job applications. Waiting is tough.

Those mornings following the resurrection of Jesus were tough for the disciples too. It seems, according to John's gospel that after Jesus appeared to them in the Upper Room a week after the resurrection, that Jesus left them for awhile. Maybe that was when he ascended to be with the Father in heaven to celebrate in heaven what was accomplished on earth. He too, heard those words every person who enters into heaven hears, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Much was given you, much you have accomplished." But on his arrival in heaven I'm sure it was like the way the father greeted the Prodigal son when he returned home. I can picture God seeing Jesus ascending to heaven and he runs and greets him half way with hugs and kisses as he tells him how much he has missed him these last 33 years. "Come let's celebrate" he may have said. "Michael, sound the trumpets and get the banquet table ready. My son has returned to his home…alert the heavenly cooks and let us rejoice before he returns to finish what he had been sent to do."

And while Jesus speaks with his Father in heaven the disciples wait for his visit once again. They waited and waited. But like most of us, it was tough to wait. What should they do? How long before Jesus would be back? What does he want us to do? So they sat and waited. However, Peter, you know how unpredictable he was, was getting

tired just sitting around. He needed to be doing something. Listen to John as he described a day when they were waiting for Jesus. **John 21:1-3**

*After this, Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time at the Tiberias Sea (the Sea of Galilee). This is how he did it: [2] Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the brothers Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. [3] Simon Peter announced, "I'm going fishing." The rest of them replied, "We're going with you."*

I can picture it now... Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John sitting in the Upper Room playing dominoes or maybe some card games. They were thinking about these last few days or weeks or even months. Maybe they were thinking about the 3 years they had been together. I'm sure there were laughs, tears, doubts, questions, wonderings, yes, wondering now what. If Jesus has died, and if he has risen, then what? Well there isn't any "if" is there. No! For they had seen him, heard his voice, touched his wounds and he is alive. Why he even breathed new life into them that day in the Upper Room when he came to them. The question for them now is, now what? Peter was getting kind of antsy and he said to them. "Hey fellows, since we don't know when Jesus will appear to us again, why not go fishing? I'd like to feel that fresh wind blowing in my face again. I miss being out on the sea lowering the nets to see how big a catch we could find. And this is a good time to be fishing. I watched others bring in boat loads. I read in the Jerusalem Daily Star there is an abundance of fish this year. I'm going fishing. Anyone care to join me?" With that, the disciples headed for the boat docks. Peter writes a note and puts in on the table. It states very simply….."GONE FISHING."

Waiting is tough. You been there? You know, waiting for something? Waiting to get a doctor's appointment. Waiting results from tests taken. Waiting to play in a World Series. Why, we hate to wait in lines. That's one of the reason lots of people shop on

line these days. No lines. No hassles from a salesperson. No dealing with rude people. We don't want to wait at a counter at a fast food place so we use the drive through only to wait in line to place an order, then to pay, then wait some more at the next window. Waiting is tough. We aren't geared to wait too long for something. It's like when you were a kid and you had to wait to open birthday presents or at Christmas seeing all the presents under the tree knowing you couldn't unwrap any of them until the proper time.

I think all the disciples decided to go fishing that day to pass the time away. Maybe they thought it would be relaxing. Even Matthew a tax collector may have enjoyed helping out on one of the boats. They went back to their old fishing grounds and Peter and James and John got their boats ready, checked their nets and made sure they had some supplies as they prepared to set sail that afternoon.

Did I mention waiting is tough? It was that day for these fishermen. Happily they set out to catch some fish, enjoy the sea once again, smell the fresh Tiberian sea water, and the smell of what else, the fish they were going to catch. Peter, James and John knew the hot spots from their old fishing days. They sailed freely to their spot when the best time for fishing came. It was dusk, and the weather was perfect. The water was peaceful. They sang as they went about their chores. Peter had a great voice and began to sing, "He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today." The others joined in from the other boat, "Salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives," they all sang." Then happily they concluded, "He lives within my heart." They were happy, enjoying the moment. Peter puts his hands in the water and splashes some on his face and smiles as a few drops fall upon his lips and he tastes the sea he once fished. It was a heavenly moment. When they came to the right spot, they hoisted the nets and began to drop them over the side. "Ouch!" cried Peter, as he threw out the nets for the first time in almost 3 years. "That hurt" he told the others. They all laughed and said he was getting soft. And over and over again they tossed out their nets and each time they retrieved them the nets

were empty. At first they did not mind because this had happened many times as they fished before.  So they tried and tried again and each time they came up empty. They even tried other places but as the night moved on and daylight was approaching still they had no fish in their boats. What seemed to be a good idea in the morning was now turning out to be a day of frustration for Peter and his friends. Some might have even said they should have stayed in Jerusalem and went to the movies.

Waiting is tough! Even when fishing. I know that for a fact. I am not a fisher person. Some have tried to teach me how to do it. But I don't have the patience. One day a friend took us to Lake Shelbyville on their houseboat. That was a story in itself. But we went out on a small boat, just him and me, and I finally caught a fish. When he measured it, it was an inch to short so I had to toss it back in. Later when I told a barber that I was not a good fisherman for I never caught a fish I could keep and I told him about the one that almost became my first catch, he said I should have done like any true fishermen would have done that day….stomped on it to make it bigger!

Waiting is tough! Peter and his gang decided the fish were not going to bite so they headed home. They were all tired from the evening work. It was kind of relaxing yet, you know, they wish they had some fish for their labor. But not this time. Perhaps they should have just hung around and waited for Jesus.

But something amazing was about to happen. When they were about ready to tie up their boats at the dock a voice came yelling from the shore asking how the fishing was that night. "Lousy" Peter yells out. "Didn't catch a thing" he said. The voice told them to push out just a little and throw their nets out again. Peter looked toward the shore at who was speaking thinking who does he think he is. I've fished these waters many times and now that it is daylight the fish have gone deep to sleep. "Go ahead and throw your nets out" the voice speaks again. James and John look at Peter kind of shrugging their shoulders thinking, okay one more time then lets head for home. They

throw their nets in and almost instantly, just as they hit the water, one fish after the other jumps into the net. They disciples get excited as they begin to reel in their nets. The nets were so heavy their muscles popped from the strain. The man on the shore had a smile on his face as he watched them with glee. Already he had a fire going as he watched. While trying to get the nets secured in the boat with the fish John smells the smoke from the fire and looks toward the man on the shore and after staring at him, trying to shade his eyes from the sun he realizes this person on the shore is someone he knew. "It's Jesus" John mumbles. Then he says it a little louder, "It's the Lord! It's Jesus!" And all eyes turn to see, and when they do, Peter, half dressed, half naked, let's go of his side of the net, leaps overboard and swims toward shore. I bet he could have beaten any Olympic swimmer that day.

Yes, waiting is tough! But in this case it was worth it. That day they got to see Jesus…. In fact they had breakfast with him. And folks, to show you how great a day it was, the fish that Jesus was cooking didn't come from their net….I believe it came from the heavenly pond that he brought back to show them what they could expect from heaven….

What does all this have to say to us this morning? Well, there are things worth waiting for. Like Sami and Rebekah when they pass their drivers test and get their license all those hours behind the wheel will be worth it when they set sail one day on their own. Like those who will graduate this year the waiting will be worth it when they either get accepted in the college of their choice or find a place of employment. For those contemplating marriage finding the right mate is worth the wait. For those expecting a baby when that baby is born and you hold them, well, the joy is worth all that waiting. Those of you who are mothers today know what I mean…..after nine months of struggles when you delivered that baby or those babies, joy filled your hearts……over and over again.

For the disciples, for Peter and John when they saw the Lord that morning what a joy it was. And that leads me to say that there are things that we too are still waiting for in our own lives. Maybe answers to a prayer we have lifted over and over again. Maybe a healing we have been dealing with. The one thing I would say is wait for the Lord, yes wait for the Lord. For one day your waiting will be over and you will find joy at that time.

You see. That's the beauty of the resurrection. Jesus lives. And one final thing worth waiting for is when we finally make it to our heavenly home…what a day of rejoicing that will be…..can I have a resounding "Amen!"

*[12] Jesus said, "Breakfast is ready."*