

Easter 3c: 4/10/16
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In the name of the risen Christ.

Yesterday was the opening day of fishing season in CT, did you know?

Not being much of an angler myself, frankly, I didn't.
Ironically enough, I'd spent much of the week *thinking* about fishing,
thanks to the story in today's gospel.
It comes at the very end of John's gospel.
The disciples have already seen the risen Christ three times so far
and, well, it must feel like time to get on with their lives.
Simon Peter suggests that they do what they know best: Go fishing.

But it's hard to believe that any of these guys ever made a living
as a fisherman.
For they cast their nets all night on one side of the boat –
and get not a nibble
Finally, a man on the beach calls out for them
to try their luck on the *other* side.

Can you imagine being so clueless
as to do something for hours without realizing you should try
something different?

Well, yes, actually, I can.
Just yesterday morning I was walking around a lake –
a lake, for God's sake –
for the longest time,
on opening day of fishing season,
when I (should be embarrassed to admit)
finally noticed, hey, these people are FISHING!

And then something I should've already known hit me:
Jesus is here.
Right here in Chatfield Hollow State Park.

Jesus is here –
with the guys from DEEP with their big tank of trout
stocking the lake over here,
and the guys (and a few gals) in their waders fishing over there.

Sometimes it's just as simple as that.
Stopping in your tracks,
getting out of your own way, out of your own head
long enough to see what's going on around you.
Long enough to realize that God in Jesus is there,
and has been all along.

As if to confirm this little epiphany,
out of nowhere an osprey circled majestically over the lake
and dove down with laser precision
to snatch a fish with one graceful swoop.

Yep, God in Christ Jesus,
Creator of heaven and earth was there alright.
And it only took me most of the morning to notice.

Now in my defense, I'm in pretty good company.
It took those disciples in John's gospel all night,
plus the promise of breakfast on the beach, to see Jesus.

And in today's first reading,
that famous story in Acts about the calling of our namesake Paul,
well, look what it takes to get *his* attention.

Saul (as he's then known) –
his only knowledge of Jesus is in persecuting his followers.
Saul is all but struck by lightning –
literally, blinded by the light.
Scripture tells us that though his eyes were opened,
Saul could see nothing for three days –
three days, as if in a dark tomb.

God wants nothing more than to be known by us.
God knows us better than we know ourselves –
and loves us even so.
God sent Jesus to live as one of us,
to know life as we know it,
to show us how to live.
And through the power of the resurrection,
Jesus is here. Still. Jesus is here.

That was the gift to those disciples that morning on the lake, wasn't it?
Not just fish abundant,
not even breakfast on the beach,
but the assurance that Jesus is still there.

The shock and euphoria and chaos
of Easter morning and the first resurrection appearances were subsiding.
It was all slowly sinking in.
Yes, Jesus had died and arisen.
Yes, it was glorious good news.
And, yes, there was still work to do.

Jesus would be with them – and stay with them always –
as they did the work he'd given them to do.
To forgive as they had been forgiven;
to love, and to feed and tend all of creation,
knowing that Jesus is there.

That's really not so different from what happened to Saul
as he emerged from his three days of darkness.
Surrounded by brave Christians he once persecuted
and enlightened by the Holy Spirit,
"something like scales fell from his eyes"
and he saw that Jesus was still there, even for him. Even for Saul.

And even for us too.
Why is this so easy for us to miss?

Well, it's still Easter.

For us as Christians Easter is not a day, but a whole season,
indeed a way of life.

Let's use this time to practice the presence of Jesus
who's with us all the time.

Jesus is here.

In simple pleasures –
like walks or fishing or whatever brings you joy.

Jesus is here.

In those magical moments when we're transported beyond ourselves –
seeing the first osprey of the season,
being moved by art or music,
falling in love.

Jesus is here.

In frustration and work that is hard,
when we cast our nets for hours and come up empty.

Jesus is here.

And, in anguish and darkness,
Jesus is there too.

This is my hope and my challenge for you this week, and for myself:

Pay attention.

Take nothing for granted.

Trust that Jesus is here – still, no matter what.

For God's sake, enjoy his company.

Amen to that.

