

## **Breakfast with Jesus**

**John 21:4-17**

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**June 7, 2015**

So, what do you like to eat for breakfast?  
Are you a eggs and bacon kind of person?  
Cheerios with a little sliced banana?  
Jam and toast, perhaps?

At the Parsonage, we are a house divided when it comes to breakfast.  
Brigitta is home , so we had to lay in a supply of muesli.  
Andres wants his everything bagel and cream cheese.  
David eats Quaker Oat Squares, cinnamon variety –  
and *only* cinnamon oat squares, I might add –  
there was a brief scare last year when it appeared the cinnamon variety was going off the  
market, and so we stockpiled them.  
And by stockpiled, I mean dozens of boxes. I'm not kidding.  
(There's a whole 'nother sermon here, I have no doubt, but I'm not sure where to go with it....)

One of the fun things about traveling is sitting down for breakfast in a new place and seeing  
what lands in front of you.  
In Abu Dhabi, a big bowl of yogurt and chickpeas and toasted pita broken into bits.  
In India, steamed rice cakes and coconut curry.  
And in Eastern Europe, meat. Ham, sausage, sausage wrapped *in* ham, salami.

For me, my favorite breakfast was and always will be my grandmother's corncakes.  
My grandparents lived not far from us, and so on weekends when my parents were away,  
or when we just wanted to spend time with them,  
my brother and sister and I would spend the night in their big ol' house,  
and we'd wake up to my Grandmother calling up the stairs "cakes are on the griddle!"  
I know, it sounds like something out of 'Little House on the Prairie', but that's really how it  
was!

Corncakes were pancakes made out of cornmeal;  
and I'm telling you, they were amazing –  
their best quality was their ability to soak up LOTS of syrup,  
which is, after all, the main point of pancakes.

So, I don't know, maybe that's why I've always loved this particular Jesus story,  
the one that Leonard just read to you.

'Cause it's got Jesus making breakfast for his buddies,  
cooking up breakfast on the griddle and then hollering to them that it's ready,  
come and get it.

Not so much corncakes, though – Jesus was serving up fish.  
Fried fish for breakfast.

It's a great little story.

Takes place soon after the resurrection – don't know how long, really, a couple weeks  
probably?

Long enough that Peter and some of the other disciples have left Jerusalem and gone on back  
to their homes in Galilee,  
and gone back to work. Fishing.

Who knows why really – maybe they weren't really sure what else to do at that point?  
maybe they needed the money?

Anyway, so, it's another day on the Sea of Galilee, and Peter and his buddies are out on their  
boats fishing,

and – whoa – out of nowhere, Jesus appears on the beach.

And at first they don't recognize him, but when they do, Lord have mercy are they excited to  
see him ... and in one of the funnier lines of the Bible, the scripture says that Peter was so  
eager to get to Jesus that he “put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the  
lake.”

Sort of reverse skinny dipping – put on a full set of clothes and *then* jump in the water. Maybe  
it's just me, but I think that's funny.

Anyway, Peter is that excited. And when he gets to the beach, clothes dripping wet, Jesus  
says, “come and get it – I've got breakfast on the griddle.”

Of all things you expect the Messiah to say, “I've got your breakfast ready” probably isn't one  
of them.

But there he is, fire going, some bread, some fish fried up.

And Jesus feeds them breakfast.

Takes the bread and breaks it, gives it to them

Takes the fish off the fire and gives it to them.

Before I say more about Jesus and his fish,

let me say a bit more about my Grandmother and her corncakes.

Here's something you need to know: those corncakes were for a purpose.

We didn't just eat up that breakfast and then loll around watching Saturday morning  
cartoons. We *wished* we did.

But that big breakfast, that syrup-laden tummy full of cornmeal, was to give us energy for  
what came next.

And what came next was: weeding.

My grandmother had a huge vegetable patch. Patch isn't even the right word. Field. Or so it seemed, anyway.

And our job as grandkids was to get out there – with *her*, I might add, 'cause she worked harder than any of us – get out there and weed the collard greens and the mustard greens and the turnip greens –

all of which looked remarkably like weeds to us.

So that breakfast she gave us had a purpose. To fuel us up, get us ready, send us on out to work.

So what I'm telling you is that Jesus' breakfast on the beach had a purpose too.

I don't just mean the rib-sticking qualities of fried fish and bread.

Jesus fed them that day with more than food.

He was feeding them with the gift of his presence right there in the middle of their workday.

He was feeding them with the gift of love and grace, memory and hope.

And that was all for a purpose.

The story says that when they had finished eating breakfast on the beach,

when they were fed with food and love and grace and kindness,

then Jesus turned to Peter for a little conversation.

Turned to this disciple whom he had already chosen to be in charge of things after he left,

Peter, his main man.

And Jesus said "Peter, do you love me?"

"You know I do, Lord" said Peter.

"Then feed my lambs," said Jesus.

"Okay," said Peter, probably a little confused.

"Do you love me?" said Jesus again.

"Yes," said Peter, "I just said that."

"Take care of my sheep," said Jesus.

"DO you love me?"

"Lord, you know I do," said Peter.

"Then you feed my sheep," said Jesus.

"Feed my sheep."

I've fed you, Jesus was saying,

now I'm asking you to feed others.

I've offered love to you,

now I'm asking you to do the work of love to others.

I have gifted you with my presence,

now be bearers of that presence to others.

I have fed you for a purpose.

Go feed my lambs.

What I love about this story isn't just that Jesus makes breakfast.  
I love that pretty much everything you need to know about church happens on that beach,  
in that conversation that Peter and Jesus have over a plate of fried fish.  
When we ask people why they come to this church,  
why they join this church,  
what we hear over and over are two things –  
because I need to get something ...  
and because I need to give something.

Isn't that, really, why we're all here?  
Isn't that really what church is?  
It is that place we come to to be fed.  
It's that place we come to so that we can be strengthened, filled, nourished, loved – so we  
can get what we need.  
But it's also that place that sends us out like Jesus was sending Peter out,  
like my grandmother sent us out.  
We go out from this place ready,  
we got out to the field strengthened,  
we go out to the world to do the work of love,  
to tend God's sheep, to feed his lambs.  
We come here to be fed and then to feed .

That **is** the life of faith.  
To be given what we need – and then to offer to others what *they* need.  
To be fed – and then to do the work of feeding others.  
To receive – and then to give.  
Because you can't strengthen others without having first been strengthened.  
You can't nurture others with love until you've been fed yourself.

Breakfast first – then get to work.

This week I learned about a minister in Philadelphia named Violet Little.  
Violet Little.  
She is a Lutheran pastor,  
and for many years she served a church like this one, as pastors do.  
That all changed one evening.  
She'd had to take a bus crosstown,  
and in the bus station where she was waiting, she'd headed to the women's room.  
And it was full of homeless women.  
They were using the bathroom to wash -

to wash themselves, to wash their hair, their clothes.  
One was using the hair dryer to dry a pair of pants.  
And Violet began to talk with her,  
but their conversation was cut short when the police arrived  
and told the women to get moving.  
In that moment, Violet Little, says,  
she suddenly felt a calling to give the homeless  
a community that would feel like home. "My life," she says, "was forever changed."

Rev. Violet Little started a church.  
A church without a steeple,  
without pews, without walls or a door.  
It's called The Welcome Church -- and it is has no building --  
but it is church for those who are homeless in Center City Philadelphia.  
They have bible study, in whatever space they can borrow --  
a women's group -- fellowship teas.  
And communion -- well, communion worship is held outdoors,  
under a tree,  
on a stretch of grass alongside the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.  
Violet brings a card table,  
puts a tablecloth on it,  
and puts out grape juice and bread.  
And as many as two hundred people gather, for worship,  
songs and readings, prayers and fellowship,  
and communion.  
Two hundred show up, even in the snow, to be fed the gifts that Christ offers to them through  
the loving hands of this pastor:  
to be fed bread and cup.

Seems to me that what Violet Little is doing is pretty much exactly what Jesus on the beach  
was telling Peter to do.  
Feed my lambs, he said.  
I have fed you -- now feed my lambs.  
Rev. Violet Little, strengthened by the love of Christ,  
now feeds others -- literally --  
offering the communion of bread and cup on a grassy median strip.

In just a moment, we'll share the same meal  
that our homeless brothers and sisters in Philadelphia share.  
The same Jesus who offered his friends breakfast on the beach

offers us also:

food to sustain us,  
grace to nourish us.

It is the simplest of meals.

It is the meal Jesus shared in an upper room before his death.

It is the meal that has sustained God's people through the centuries,

It is the same meal Violet Little offers on a grassy median strip,

where all are welcome,

as all are welcome here.

And when we have tasted this cup and shared this bread,

then we too are called to find our ways to feed Christ's lambs,

to care for his people.

In the lives we lead, in what we do today and tomorrow and every day to come,

we too are asked to feed those who are hungering for what we here have received:

love in abundance,

grace unearned,

mercy never-ending,

compassion without limit.

Breakfast is ready.

The meal is served.

*All who hunger, gather gladly.*

Amen.