

### **Sermon Third Sunday of Easter 2016**

Many of us will have cooked a meal for friends, it is a way of showing that you care, that you enjoy their company. Food is something that brings people together and is used to help celebrations and to mourn. Here, in the last of the resurrection appearance described by John, Jesus lights a fire on the beach and prepares food for his friends who have been up all night on an unsuccessful fishing trip.

On some trips to the Holy Land you may be shown a beach where it is thought this may have happened. It actually doesn't matter whether it is that beach or not, the atmosphere around the Lake of Galilee is so evocative of those times, it feels so unchanged, that it is easy to imagine such an event.

It seems that they were still a bit uncertain and confused about the resurrection, as it says: "They did not ask him who he was, because they knew it was the Lord". Yet again Jesus performs a miracle with fish, maybe also recalling the first calling of some of the disciples from their fishing

jobs, but we are shown the power of the Risen Lord. More than someone who has risen from the dead, more than a 'ghost' who can be touched and will eat but the powerful, loving Son of God.

Two people receive their commissions from this Son of God in the reading today, both of whom will be important in the founding of a Christian community. Peter is given the forgiveness for his denial that he needs to hear and sent out to spread the good news of Jesus. Saul, the persecutor of Christians, in a very spectacular way, moves from darkness into light.

An important part of this commissioning into service is the receiving of forgiveness. Yes, both will go on to make mistakes, but both have received and acknowledged Christ as their saviour, both will work in the power of the Holy Spirit.

One writer describes the readings for today as us being able to see 'The consequences of the Resurrection both from a heavenly and an earthly point of view at once, which is a very

three-dimensional experience.” The welcome given in heaven to the one who has sacrificed everything for us, the God of power, majesty and might and the one who meets the disciples, Saul and us just where we are.

When we recognise the Risen Lord, who meets us where we are, the friend, the lover and king, our lives will also change for ever. We will repent, we will receive forgiveness and then we too will be commissioned as a servant of the Servant King. Peter had to let go of his visions of greatness that he had when he started to follow Jesus and from a place of weakness start again. Saul had to let go of his knowledge, his theological correctness; all that made up his identity and from a different place of weakness start again.

Over and over again, God forgives his people. We have received that forgiveness earlier in this service, later we will share the meal that Christ has prepared for us. We are, once again, offered a chance to grow closer to the powerful God who is also a loving Father and friend, we

are offered the possibility of receiving his Holy Spirit, so that we can fulfil his commission for us.

We celebrate the Risen Lord today, we praise him, worship him and give him thanks, may we also receive from him so that we can be of service to him.