

Sermon

'Life in all its Fullness'

Children's Address, Year B, 2018, Easter 3



It's got very cold in the last couple of days. We're going to tell some stories this morning around a camp fire. Some of the best stories are told around a fire. I wonder why that is?

[Get kids to help build the 'fire'] Have you ever helped to build a campfire? Of course you should only ever build a real fire with a grown up.

['Toast' marshmallows]

Ask: Have you ever eaten a meal that was cooked on an open fire? What did you eat? What did it taste like?

One of the most memorable meals I have ever eaten was cooked on an open fire on the beach.

[Tell the story of Manda Toto and the crayfish.]

I couldn't quite believe I was there. I almost had to pinch myself. We kept saying to ourselves: 'This is the life!'. And afterwards, when I have thought back to that time, I have thought the same thing. That was the life! It was a moment that engaged all my senses and made me feel really alive:

I could hear the water lapping on the shore and the wind in the trees and the laughter of my friends.

I could taste the freshness of the crayfish.

I could feel the salt water on my skin and the sand beneath my feet;

I could see beauty all around me, in the water and the sky and the faces of the people around me.

I could smell the smoke from the fire and good food and that salty smell that you get at the beach.

In the church we often say that Jesus came to bring us life in all its fullness. And at that moment, that is what I felt.

We heard a story from the bible this morning about another very memorable meal on the beach. It was another meal where Jesus's friend might have struggled to believe that they were really there; that it was really happening. They might have wanted to pinch themselves. Because, after all, only a few days before, they had seen Jesus die on the cross, and their whole lives, their whole world, had seemed to fall apart. Some of you were here on Good Friday at our children's service and Father Jonathan asked us how we felt when we looked at the picture of Jesus on the cross that we can see in our windows, up behind the altar there. Some of us said that it made us feel sad, and disappointed. That was how the disciples had been feeling, very sad and disappointed and afraid. Nothing seemed to be going the way they had expected to. Sometimes our lives can be like that too. We can be disappointed and sad when things don't go the way we expected. Can you think of times like that. We can feel like they might never get better. And when things do get better, when God turns things around, we might still struggle to believe that it's really happening.

If you were here on Easter Sunday, you will have heard the amazing story about how Jesus came back from the dead and about how his friend Mary had run to tell his friends the good news. And last week we heard about how Jesus appeared to his friends when they were hiding away, sad and afraid, and had shown them that it was really him and that he really was alive.

In this morning's story, some of the disciples have left their hiding place and gone out fishing. With all the amazing, almost unbelievable things that had happened, they were still very unsure about what the future might hold for them. They were waiting to see Jesus again, waiting to hear from him about what they should do next. And in the meantime, while they were waiting, they might have been feeling a bit restless, a bit worried still. And perhaps one of them had said, 'Let's not just sit around, twiddling our thumbs and feeling worried, let's do something. We know how to fish, let's go out fishing'. And so in their time of uncertainty, they had gone back to something that was familiar. Something they knew they were good at. But they fished all night, they threw the nets out again and again, and they didn't catch even a single fish. Nothing was going right for them. They were doing it the way they had always done it.

Then, as they were sailing back to shore the next morning, feeling a bit deflated and frustrated, they saw a man on the shore, who called out to them and asked if they had caught anything. Nup, nothing, they said. And the man called back: 'Throw your nets out on the other side of the boat and you will catch some fish.' Some of them probably thought: You don't know what you're talking about, we're experienced fisherman and we've been fishing all night and haven't caught anything; what would you know?'. But maybe because they were being polite, or because they thought they had nothing to lose, they gave it a try. And what do you think happened?

Loads of fish

And that's when the penny dropped for Peter. The man was Jesus.

Jesus was there and he had already got a fire going and had cooked them a lovely breakfast of fresh bread and grilled fish. He knew what they would need. He knew that they would be hungry after a long, frustrating night of fishing, and he gathered them round and served them a meal, breaking the bread and giving it to them. And I can imagine Jesus and his friends sitting around that fire on the beach, resting their tired bodies, eating good food, enjoying the beauty all around them on that still, clear morning, laughing and feeling the joy of good company and of telling stories and of being reunited with someone they loved and had thought they had lost. Maybe it was a bit like the meal I had with my friends on the beach on Manda Toto all those years ago. Jesus was giving his friends a wonderful gift. He was giving a glimpse, that morning of what life should be like; of what life could be like if we listen to and obey the risen Jesus Christ. He was showing them, and us, that if we try to do things on our own, without him, then often things just won't go right. But if we believe his promises to us, if we listen and do what he says, then we will live fruitful abundant lives. If we allow him to care for us and provide for our needs and to be our friend. He was giving them, and us, a glimpse of life in all its fullness, of abundant life.

Lucy Chamberlain