

John 21:1-14

There are some dirty jobs in this world. In fact, there are so many dirty jobs—jobs you & I probably don't even know about—that the Discovery Channel has a show called "Dirty Jobs". Week after week you are invited, if your stomach can handle it, to travel with Mike Rowe and experience first hand what the dirtiest jobs in America are like. You could watch Mike spend a day as a monkey rehab specialist, a Penguin Keeper, an oil field roughneck, a gum remover, a Mosquito control officer, a Cactus mover, a coal miner, an oyster fisherman, a catfish noodler, a septic tank cleaner, a mud driller, and the list goes on. All of these *are* dirty jobs or, at least, jobs that involve tasks your average American would not look forward to doing. Jesus and his disciples (you and me included) actually have a dirty job too. Our job from the Risen Jesus isn't going to make it to primetime television. As Jesus appeared to his disciples next to the Sea of Galilee, he subtly reminded them of all that surrounds this dirty job. He was reminding them, "**A Dirty Job Changes Everything!**" because **1. Jesus energizes his workers, and 2. Jesus promises his providence.**

1. Jesus energizes his workers

After Jesus had risen from the dead on Easter Sunday, he told the women: "Do not be afraid. God and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matthew 28:10). In full obedience the Lord's command, the disciples went to Galilee. And they waited. And they waited. And they realized they still needed to make some sort of living, until Jesus revealed anything otherwise. So, they began fishing again. I say, again, because you'll remember that this was their occupation, before Jesus called them to be his apostles. They were fishermen and it was no easy job. It had long hours, back-breaking labor, and a smell which could not have been something the Mrs. enjoyed greeting at the door. It was a dirty job. But this is not the dirty job the Lord Jesus had in mind for his disciples. Jesus had another dirty job in store for them—and his plan had not changed since he first called them.

Back almost three years earlier, Jesus had stood beside the same Sea of Galilee. He had seen boats at the water's edge and called to Simon Peter for his boat. They put off from shore, the Lord taught the people, and then he gave Peter a command: "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Peter responded: "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:4,5). The catch was so big that their nets began to tear. Other fishermen (James & John among them) had to come and help Peter with his mammoth haul. Peter was astounded. He fell to the floor of the boat and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man." But Jesus only spoke those powerful words, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men" (Lk 5:10).

By his almighty power as the Risen and Victorious Lord, Jesus worked a similar miracle with his disciples, following his resurrection. Jesus appeared and commanded them to cast their nets and enjoy the find. By this display of power Jesus was calling to mind the miracle he had worked years earlier. He was pointing them to a bigger and far messier job: the work of fishing for men. This is the dirty job that changes everything!

You might ask, What makes fishing for men a "dirty job"? After all, we are fishers of men & women here at First German. With our "Listening Sunday" we are planning ways to bring the good news of peace in Christ to our fellow members and to our community. I don't think there's anything dirty about that... but we need to look a little deeper. Wherever sinners are involved, there will be a dirty mess. Our job of fishing for men is dirty because it involves working for the eternal good of sinners, even though we ourselves are sinners. We aren't going to be perfect in our work, and the people we are fishing for won't all coming bursting in our doors. In fact, we may face some fierce and messy rejection from people. We may see our own sins and failures far too

clearly—and it will impress upon us: Saving Sinners is Messy Work. Yet, that’s what Christ Jesus came to do. He came to seek and to save what was messy and covered in the filth of sin. Now he has called us to carry out the work of spreading that message. When we fall down and see the dirty sins we too commit (neglect, apathy, anger and everything in between), we will need his strength.

To carry out this job, **Jesus energizes his workers.** He has risen and conquered Death for us. He stands victorious as living proof of God’s power and love, guaranteeing our eternal rescue. His Resurrection is the fuel in our souls, propelling us to go and share. Look at what Peter did when he realized it was the Risen Jesus, standing on the seashore. He wrapped his cloak around him and dove into the lake. He couldn’t wait to see the Lord and to be near him. He was energized because the living Savior stood before him.

There was another reason Peter was so energized. Not only was Jesus giving them a miraculous catch of fish, recalling their job to fish for men, he was also helping Peter to see an important fish who was saved. John’s Gospel puts it this way: “This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.” For Peter the number three was a meaningful number. On the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter had stood before men and women and he had denied even knowing Jesus *three times*. He had called down curses on himself and swore oaths, “I don’t know the man!” ... But now Jesus resurrection had changed everything. Jesus wanted Peter to see that the fish whom he saved was Peter. And Jesus loved to save him. Jesus loved Peter to death and to life. Jesus changed everything for Peter by carrying out the dirty job of death on a cross. Now Jesus was alive and making Peter and all believers clean. Jesus makes you and me clean too. We are fish he has saved. What a horrible thing it would be if we shared the message of Christ, but failed to see ourselves as fish in His net of love. He does the dirty work of washing away our sins and delivering us from death. Then he sends us out to do the same for others—always pointing people to his Work and his Resurrection. **That job makes an eternal difference.**

2. Jesus promises his providence.

When the disciples reached the shore, Jesus had another miracle in store for them. He said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” They all sat around and ate a miraculous meal the Lord had prepared for them. He had bread already made and fish already cooking over a charcoal fire. He fed and cared for the workers he had energized. By caring for the needs of these weary fishermen, Jesus again shares a bold word with us: **He promises us his providence.**

Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had sent out his disciples to preach and teach the good news of the kingdom in the towns and villages of Judea. He had reminded his disciples *about this* before he left them and died. He had said, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered. Nothing. They lacked nothing, even though they had gone out with nothing. How often don’t we complain about lacking everything, even though we go out with everything! We moan and wonder about the future of our congregation. Yet we have a Living Lord, who promises his providence. He promises to watch over us in whatever we do. He takes care of our worries and soothes our souls. He calls on us: “Concentrate your whole attention on doing the Lord’s work, to his glory, according to his Word, in whatever you do!” But he commands us: “Leave all the care for your physical, material well-being in my loving hands.” This is his call. This is his promise. He has a job for us, a job that at times may be dirty. But ultimately it’s the work of reaching sinners that need to hear about their Savior. That’s work we can carry out trusting in his plan. Amen.

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