**New Kilpatrick**

**Sunday 1st May 2022**

**John 21:1-14**

**Podcast**

**Gathering**

Hello, I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of new Kilpatrick Parish, and again, thank you for the invitation to join you today.

Today, let us create a space, a sacred space, wherever we are to shape silence and word in the place might meet the love that created us, the God who names us, the saviour who calls us, and the spirit who encourages us.

And in this space, find ourselves in a story, a post resurrection story, where we are on a beach early one morning, some disciples have gone fishing, the one familiar thing they have, because no one has been able to grasp hold of what has just happened, and certainty feels scarce, and there, encounter a God who meets us in abundance.

**Reading John 21:1-14**

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. **2**Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,[a] Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. **3**Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

**4**Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. **5**Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” **6**He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. **7**That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. **8**But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards[b] off.

**9**When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

**10**Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” **11**So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. **12**Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. **13**Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. **14**This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

**Prayer**

We know that beach, O God,

Where we come uncertain

Where futures seems confusing

Where the anchors we once had have been released

And how we understand the world

Has changed

There are no markers any more

The certainties are fragile

And we find ourselves with the disciples

Trying to find the things we are familiar with

And finding they don’t work

It is our present world

Our church

Our politics

Our economy

Our culture

And here is where you meet us

In the oldest stories

We discover the most contemporary moments

So we bring here the confusion we feel about our world

The changes we can’t quite grasp

The subtle way our language has shifted

The way our politics is now done

The sense of what it is to be church

And what we are unable to do that we once took for granted

These are resurrection times

And may we live into that resurrection

That promise of new life

That shakes itself awake after tombs have been sealed

That finds new growth where deserts have been

That breathes life in all that is moribund and dry

Living Lord

Gracious Lord

May we gather here

And feast with you

On the abundance of hope

And the generosity of love

And the presence of promise

Hear us

In the global prayer that unites us

**Reflection**

We meet a story today where the disciples have gone fishing because everything feels empty and uncertain after that first easter… and in that scarcety… they meet the risen christ… in abundance

Recognising the risen christ is probably THE vital task of the church today. It probably always has been, but we’ve taken it for granted, the church has been around for generations, we’ve felt we’ve had meaning, purpose, something almost vital to our nation and community. So, on this side of the pandemic, this side where a lot we took for granted no longer can, where is the risen christ… where is the resurrected life: the life of possibility, the life that has a relationship with the future?

I’ve been a minister now for more than thirty years, I sound like an old man, long in the tooth, but I’ve never felt the church nationally being more lifeless, yet never felt more potential, and the chance to free ourselves into what we are becoming locally.

Those who are members of the congregation will have received a letter about the presbytery plan… a plan which is desperately trying to hold on to familiar structures, a plan so institutionalised it understands only one way of being the church. But it is a pattern that no longer works.

I don't know what does work. That’s the scary bit. I just don’t know what will work, other than live as a congregation with honest integrity, in relationship with our neighbours in our parish, living hopefully into the future, ready to be a place of welcome and well-being and creativity and connection, and love… a conduit of… and for… good news.

And then we meet this story… the throw your nets out the others side of the boat.. .story… the unusual, never done it that way before, side of the boat, and many of us don’t know how to do that, or wish to do that, as what is familiar in our faith, and tradition and style, is comfortable and will see us out.

But we are on that boat at the moment and we’ve been given the invitation from Jesus… try the other side… what will we do?

We are being forced to think outside the boat. I’m not sure any presbytery plan will enable us to do that… as it is being created to simply keep us functioning as a church rather than to live into new resurrected life. Given the church of Scotland is one of the fastest declining churches in the world… standing in that boat… from what side will we through the nets…

But, but, but, we already know how to throw our nets out the other side. We know how to make space for others beside us in our community, We know about festivals. We know about support for the least in our local area, support for those who are vulnerable. We do that all the time. We know about worship and making it more imaginative, shaping a new kind of space which engages us in the crossroads between faith and the world. We know about podcasts and video worship, about the language we need to adopt to tell our story. We know how to approach our faith stories, not as historical facts but faith tales that in story form, ask the questions we are asking… We already doing all that but it isn’t our headline story.

Our headline story is we are declining. Like every other denomination in the west…

Might we turn ourselves around and change the rumour of the church, retell our story, work under different headlines, recreate the story that is told of this place.

Very soon we’ll be exploring as a whole congregation how we can work in a new way, from the other side of the boat, around six themes: welcome, creativity, families, relationships, communication and wellbeing.

And we do that because of this story: when the old familiar ways no longer work, no longer help us see Jesus, the kingdom. If you notice, the disciples eyes are only opened when Jesus feeds them, creates community with them, reorientates them. When he offers them a community of abundance, when they are experiencing scarcity. When they are hungry for breakfast, for connection, for future, Jesus arrives in abundance. When hope is thin, the light weak, the life vulnerable, Jesus arrives on the beach, with abundance.

The disciples recognise the risen Christ when he creates communities of abundance in the midst of scarcity, fear, uncertainty. Our task, as a faith community, is to do the same.

**Poem**

Peter knew there was something not right

After resurrection

There was emptiness

Something had broken

He had the resurrection blues

Everything was meant to change

But nothing felt that way.

He was drained

Had he missed something?

The sky was still the same colour

One day followed the next as always

But the story of the empty tomb rattled him

It meant everything must have changed

Yet the world felt no different

A phoney start

And it was a disappointment

He was standing on a sea cliff

Looking inland

Knowing he couldn’t step back

But the land before him felt completely unfamiliar

He didn’t know what to do

So he went fishing

Something he did know about

But it didn’t work

Something had happened

Resurrection had seeped in

And the usual patterns that explained his world

No longer did

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

And so we pray

Just as we are

In the places we are

For the uncertainty we feel

Because of conflict in Ukraine

And the ambitions of some

And the fears we feel

Of those in war

We pray for them

For the way our world is changing

As certainties shift

And politics loses something

And our morality is less obvious

We pray

For the least in our communities

Who receive the worst consequences

As cost of living rises

And welfare does not keep up

We pray for them

For our faith communities

Of every kind

Becoming more conservative

And insecurities mount

We pray for them

For our families and friends

Those physically and mentally unwell

Those frightened and fearful

Lonely and isolated

We pray for them

May our prayers

Become places to meet

Communities that support

Words to invite

And a way of living that resurrects

Us all.

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**