

Though some amazing things happen in this passage, this Sunday, I want to focus on the ordinary part because it may be the most important part of all. Jesus makes breakfast for his friends. That's how they recognize him. OK – maybe it's not completely ordinary. Remember that he's been crucified, dead, and sealed up in a tomb. Now, he's back. He has already appeared to them twice in a locked room – the second time for Thomas' benefit. According to John, this is his third post-resurrection appearance. And he shows up where they've been fishing through the night.

Jesus is standing on the beach at daybreak. It's one of the best times to be on the beach in my opinion. The sun appears on the horizon reflecting beautiful colors against the water. The waves crash against the shore full of life, and yet they bring a sense of calm. The salty air fills your nose and lungs completely. It's a great time to be holding a cup of hot coffee and thinking about what to get for breakfast.

When Jesus sees his friends, he inquires about their catch, and since it wasn't all that great, he sent them back into the sea to try again. This expedition goes well for the disciples, and they come back in dragging their nets. When they do, they find Jesus, tending a charcoal fire with fish and bread already starting to smell pretty delicious. I'm not sure what else they had – but I can easily imagine that kind of rustic campfire breakfast – the kind shared with friends that makes you glad to be alive.

Maybe it doesn't quite read this way to you yet, but I read this story as one of the most intimate moments Jesus has with his disciples. Sure he teaches them a lot and spends many days in their presence. Yes, there are those few scandalously intimate passages about Jesus and Mary

Magdalene – but this one tops the list for Jesus showing us how to be a true friend. Think about the list of people who've made breakfast for you. Other than the fabulous tradition of the Southern brunch, or continental breakfast at the Holiday Inn, who brews your morning coffee? Who flips Saturday morning pancakes? Who knows that you're a cold pizza for breakfast person, or a traditionalist who will only eat "breakfast foods?" How many conversations do you remember having with children over their cereal before they were sent off to school, or having with your spouse on a morning when you had the time to actually brew a second pot of coffee?

It could be that I'm reading my own experience of "breakfast" back into a passage that isn't really there. And yet, this idea of Jesus grilling up some fish for his friends is incredibly inviting to me. It makes him really real, and being that this is actually one of his after-death appearances, it makes me wonder what the gospel writer John is trying to tell us. After all, if you came back from the dead to make a point about life and love, how would you spend your post-resurrection time? Those who talk more than I do about the second coming of Jesus don't seem to be looking for him slinging hash browns at the Waffle House.

But maybe they should be. Maybe we could all take a closer look for where Jesus is showing up – because these eye witness accounts about Jesus lead me to believe that it's not going to be in the places of power and media attention. This passage of scripture is about the scandal of the Incarnation. What do I mean by that? – you might ask. When we really think carefully about it, it is rather appalling to think about God confining all of God's incredible grandeur and power and terrifying stuff into the skin of one human being. People are creaturely. They are vulnerable, messy, and downright gross sometimes. Jesus, the man, was just that. He was no different from us in all his human needs, wants, and desires. If we had that opportunity to die and return – our lives may be different – but even in most of the medical accounts of being

brought back, the person in question feels that they have come back to be closer to family, to strengthen ties with loved ones, to savor, and I mean really really savor the scent of the fish on the grill and that first cup of joe in the morning. It's not to storm the world with radical vengeance and usher in the perfect kingdom.

Jesus appearing on the beach to make breakfast is the radical promise of Christianity that lines up slightly differently from other religious traditions. Though many of the ancient religions share in common truths about God, and the universe, and humankind's search for meaning, Christianity makes the claim that God deems particular human life and human life events as holy – as worthy of full participation. As author Ronald Rolheiser has phrased it, in Christianity, you get “God with skin on.” The universal transcendent God may not be fooled into hosting a breakfast barbeque, but Christ, the God-human senses the importance of that meal to yield the kind of holy relationship that is only possible with the God who encompasses love completely.

Some folks really don't want that kind of intimacy with God. And the structures of “Church” don't always encourage that kind of intimacy with God. Are we really ready for God to make us breakfast? Say it isn't so. That means that God will know me with my morning breath and my morning hair. That means that God loves us, like that, in all our imperfect glory. What would that do to religion that expects us to keep trying harder to mask those human tendencies where we get it all wrong, where something stinks deep within us? It may put the punishing side of church out of business if we were to grasp the “God with skin on.”

When we begin to recognize Jesus, right there on the beach, stoking up that charcoal fire, it gives us the eyes to see God in all things. It's a concept I'm working to live into myself. Sure, it's easy to see holiness in that morning sunrise at the ocean, but to begin to see God in all of life

takes new eyes. It takes eyes that are softened to the Mystery of God. In a recent blog post, Richard Rohr writes, “Mysticism begins when the totally transcendent image of God starts to recede; and there’s a deepening sense of God as imminent, present, here, now, safe, and even within me. In Augustine’s words, “God is more intimate to me than I am to myself” or “more me than I am myself.” St. Catherine of Genoa shouted in the streets, “My deepest me is God!”

Perhaps that’s what we’re really struggling against – not finding God in “other” things, but finding God within ourselves. If God is that close, really really that close, it’s been us keeping God at a distance, pushing God away, and failing to make room in our busy lives for the kind of relationship that would transform us completely. God away is much easier than God within. The awful constructs of the atonement – saying that Jesus was sent to die in our place – seems somehow more palatable than the incarnation – saying that Jesus was sent to live in our skin. We are afraid of what that means. Love that deep seems too good to be true, and it is, both that good and that true.

Somehow, this feels like a new discovery. Reading scripture through the lens of the incarnation makes a whole lot more sense now. That’s not how I was taught – at least not how I have ever been formally taught. Somewhere along the way, I was let in on the big secret, through my own searching, through God seeking recognition in me. And this insight doesn’t mesh really well with either a strictly conservative or completely liberal theology. That’s not the point. It just seems human. God became human. God loves us that much.

I don’t know if this explains at all the popularity of the online comic strip “Coffee with Jesus.” It’s more the parody on meeting Jesus at Starbucks, than having Jesus grilling fish for his friends on the beach. But if you can begin to imagine Jesus present to start off your day, to meet

you throughout the day, and to know that the events of your day matter in God's eyes, what a revelation!