

So I wasn't here for the eclipse. I was a bit disappointed when I discovered that my vacation plans meant I was leaving the realm of totality and would be in Washington, D.C., instead, where only 89% of the sun would be covered by the moon.

But I still got my glasses and carried them with me as I toured the city on Monday, ready to don said glasses and behold as much of the phenomenon as I could from wherever I happened to be.

Well, at around 3pm I happened to be in Arlington National Cemetery. Which made me feel a little sheepish as I donned the glasses, but it also felt like a rather prescient location to be beholding what some were claiming to be a cataclysmic event. So for about forty-five minutes as I wandered down the paths, I'd pop my glasses on at regular intervals and glance up at the sun as it grew smaller and smaller. It didn't get dark...turns out 11% of the sun is still really powerful, but it was still magnificent to behold this convergence of sun and moon.

Only...I seemed to be one of the few people who thought so. I saw one person sprawled on the grass gazing intently skywards, and a handful of employees by the visitor center had glasses they were passing between themselves, and a few other tourists popped their glasses on and off as they walked.

But for the most part, people seemed wholly uninterested in what was happening. Maybe because we weren't in the line of totality? Maybe they'd seen a partial eclipse numerous times before? Maybe they just didn't care? I don't know. I was excited. This was a cool event, in my books. I'd been talking about it for weeks! I just couldn't understand how so many people could be walking around me as though nothing very interesting was happening in the sky above them. Didn't they realize that something cool was happening?

This is mostly the same reaction I have towards the disciples at the beginning of John 21. Because some fairly remarkable things have happened in recent days.

First the women in their group go to anoint Jesus' body, only to discover it's missing.

Then Mary reports that she's met Jesus – alive and well – in the garden outside the tomb.

Later that night the disciples are all huddled together in a locked room, when lo and behold, Jesus appears in their midst and says "Peace be with you." Which I imagine was the right thing to say given the utter amazement and astonishment the disciples must have felt.

A week later they're back in that locked room, this time with Thomas, when Jesus magics himself again through the walls and appears before them.

These aren't...small things. This man that they loved, that they followed, that they believed to be the Messiah, died. And then wasn't dead anymore. And beyond that, he no longer seems to be bound by the laws of physics.

This is the kind of thing that makes you pay attention. This is an event so unbelievable, so cataclysmic, so unexpected, that you're going to don the special glasses so you can see it better. This is the kind of thing that makes you stop what you're doing and look up.

And I'm sure that in those initial appearances the disciples were rather wide-eyed. But then Jesus disappeared again, and when we pick up the story in chapter 21, the disciples are acting as if nothing's really happened.

It's as if the last *three years* never happened, in fact. A bunch of the disciples are back in Galilee, which is where Jesus told them to go and wait for him. So there they are, twiddling their thumbs by the Sea of Galilee, Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two other disciples who John apparently doesn't think are worthy of naming. They're just sitting their waiting, and waiting, and waiting, until, Peter, ever the one for action, says, "Welp, I'm bored. I'm going fishing." And the others go with him.

So here they are, three years after Jesus first called them away from their fishing boats, called them to be "fishers of men" instead, and they're back at it. They've slunk back into the roles they once inhabited. Because what else is there to do? They haven't gotten much direction about what life post-resurrection is supposed to look like. The people who were willing to feed and house them when Jesus was with them aren't as keen anymore to house a group of leaderless men. They have to eat. Have to make a living. Have to get on with things.

So they do the thing they know how to do. They fish.

Only it seems they don't quite have the magic touch anymore, because they catch...nothing. After an entire night on the boat. Not one single fish.

They're back where they started, they're unsure about what's next, they're sleep-deprived, and they're frustrated. Can this really be what life in a post-resurrection world looks like? Has anything meaningful, anything world-changing...actually happened? Is there, in fact, any reason to don the shiny glasses?

Fast-forward two-thousand years, and I think we're still asking that question. Can this really be what life in a post-resurrection world looks like?

Because we have these moments, like the disciples had, that lead us into a place of wonder, of awe, where we're smacked in the face with the reality of God's power and grandeur and we feel, deep within us, the truth of the resurrection. We hear stories of a miraculous healing, we watch the sun set over the ocean, we witness the baptism of a friend whose whole life has been turned around because of the Gospel, and we feel the veil between heaven and earth rip just a bit.

We find ourselves in a thin space, where the presence of God feels just a bit more real, a bit more tangible, and our hearts are filled with wonder, filled with a sense of transcendence, with a deep spiritual knowledge and gratitude. The Canadian philosopher describes this as living within enchantment – we know there is something more, something sacred, something bigger than ourselves.

But then the moment is over. The sun disappears, the baptism cake is eaten and boxed up, the healed person goes back to work, and life returns to normal. We go back to our jobs, to our families...we get back into our fishing boats...and after some time we forget about the wonder and the awe and the spiritual fulfillment. We plod through the mundane stuff of life. We get parking tickets, and run out of toilet paper, and have to plan another week of meals. We go to the doctor, we become numb to all the stories of war, we roll our eyes in the direction of parliament.

And as we wake up to face another day of the same old stuff, don't you feel somewhat *disenchanted*? Don't you wonder sometimes, "Is this really all there is? Is this really what life in a post-resurrection world looks like? Is there, in fact, anything amazing happening here? Is there any reason to don the shiny glasses, anything to pay attention to, anything to behold?"

The disciples, on their boat in the early hours of the morning, spot someone on the shore. They don't know who it is, but the man engages them. He calls out, "You haven't caught any fish, have you?"

I imagine the disciples' response was a bit sour as they confirm the man's suspicions.

And then I imagine they were a bit annoyed when this person they don't know and who's potentially never fished in his life and who's likely had a good night's sleep offers his advice on the situation. "Try throwing your net over the other side of the boat."

But the disciples have nothing to lose, so they do as the man says, and within minutes, the net is weighed down with fish.

And in this moment, John moves from disenchantment to enchantment, from disorientation to reorientation. He knows who the man on the shore is. In this miracle of abundance, he recognizes Jesus.

Because Jesus has always been about abundance. Has always been about providing plenty where there was nothing, about moving people from despair to hope. The disciples saw this abundance in his first miracle, when Jesus turned water into wine. They saw this abundance when Jesus used just two fish and six loaves of bread to feed 5000 people. They saw this abundance when they were called to be his disciples, when Jesus first told them to let their nets down into deep water and they caught so many fish their nets began to break.

Jesus is deeply incarnational – by nature of becoming a human he is incarnational – but he also lives out his ministry in an incarnational way. New Testament scholar Dale Bruner says, "Jesus always communicates and accompanies his *spiritual* Word and work with some *physical-social* manifestation of expression of that Word and work." He heals. He

feeds. He raises from the dead. Jesus demonstrates abundance. He demonstrates provision. He demonstrates hope.

Which is why I love so much this scene with Jesus and his disciples on the beach. On the one hand it's quite comical. Here's Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, king over all creation, tending a small fire on a beach and cooking up a few fish. There's no great miracle here. Scott Hoezee points out that whereas Jesus fed the 5000 with only two fish, here he's feeding seven people with 153 fish. We went from a ratio of 0.0004 fish per person to 22 fish per person. Hardly the grand sign we'd expect from someone who's just been raised from the dead.

But isn't there something beautiful in this scaled back, simple moment of interaction between Jesus and his disciples? Something so inviting? For that's what this moment is...an invitation. An invitation to the disciples to step back into the life of a Jesus-follower. The parallels between this event and the calling of the disciples in Luke 5 are no accident. This is a recommissioning, a reorientation of the disciple's understanding of what they are to be doing as followers of Jesus.

Jesus is inviting them to participate in his abundance. Inviting them into a life where sharing fish on a beach isn't just about literal hunger, but serves as a signpost of the kingdom in which our souls are nourished and fed. And note that Jesus doesn't just *demonstrate* this abundance for the disciples, but calls them to participate in it immediately by asking them to share some of their catch. Jesus doesn't need their fish. The one who can walk through locked doors can surely make fish appear out of thin air. But he brings the disciples into the story. Makes them participants. And so commissions them to be participants in the kingdom.

And what I find so comforting and beautiful about this commissioning is that there's nothing terribly dramatic about it. There are no sunsets or

rainbows, nothing flashy and awe-inspiring...nothing that would require us to don protective glasses in order to take a look. Just some fish, cooking over a small fire on a beach. This is how Jesus reveals himself to his disciples. This is the kind of abundance he models for them and calls them into.

Which means that we don't need to do anything particularly flashy or awe-inspiring or overtly miraculous to be participants in the kingdom of God. We just need to be people of abundance. People who tell stories of the provision of God. People who are generous. People who speak words of hope in the midst of despair. People who come alongside those who have felt abandoned. People who live in love. These are the signposts that orient people in a disorienting world. These are the simple ways by which we live as Christ in the world.

At a worship symposium a few years ago, Scott Hoezee preached on this text and told a story he had read, related by the surgeon Dr. Richard Seltzer. One day Seltzer had to remove a tumor from the cheek of a young woman. During the surgery a tiny facial nerve was severed, leaving the woman's mouth drooping and twisted. As she lay in bed after the surgery, holding the hand of her husband, she asked, "Will my mouth always be this way?" "Yes," replied the doctor," and she nodded, falling silent, looking broken.

And then her husband smiled gently and said, "I like it. It's kind of cute." And he leaned over and kissed her, to show that their kiss still worked, and always would. Seltzer said, "In that moment I knew who the young man was, for I saw Jesus in him. I saw Jesus in his gentleness and kindness."

And so, says Hoezee, for those with eyes to see, it would be right to look into that hospital room and say, "It is the Lord."

May we have eyes to see Jesus in the lives of others.

May others see Jesus in our own acts of kindness, generosity, and love.

Would you pray with me?

And so, God of abundance,  
may we be participants in your abundance,  
signposts of your goodness,  
your provision,  
your faithfulness.

In big ways, and in small ways -  
may we be people who give generously,  
who listen, long and well,  
who love without reservation,  
who celebrate your goodness with abandon.  
In all we do, may we bear witness to Christ in us,  
so that all who know us might also come to know Christ.  
We pray this in Jesus' name,  
Amen.