

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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Change is at the center of today's gospel reading, and ... change is challenging. Change is hard because it almost always involves loss, uncertainty, and disruption – even when it's for the better. But not all change is the same. In fact, scholars note that there are two different types of change – technical change and adaptive change. Technical changes are easy solutions that often have apparent solutions. While adaptive change requires an alteration in beliefs, roles, relationships, or approaches. In short, with technical change you do something different, and with adaptive change you think different.¹ And, in today's gospel, we heard both types of change.

First, we heard that some disciples were fishing at night. From the shore, Jesus tells them to put the net out on the other side. They listen and catch a whole lot of fish. So.... what kind of change is moving the net from one side of the boat to the other – technical or adaptive? Technical. This is a quick, routine fix by doing something different. In our lives we use technical changes a lot. If the door lock is broken, we replace the lock. If we are consistently late to work, we take a new method or route. Technical change. It's simple, clear, and doable.

But that's not the only type of change we heard. Going back to the story, we heard that Peter put *on* his clothing and dove in the water (which is odd, right?). Meanwhile, the other disciples brought in the fish and had a holy

¹ <http://www.davidlose.net/2014/02/adaptive-and-technical-change/>

barbeque on the beach. These disciples noticed the presence of Christ at the water and a meal, which are both key words for us Christians. That's because water reminds us of finding God in baptism (like Cameron's today), and a shared meal shared reminds us of finding God in ... communion. I could make a whole sermon on these two images, but today we're after a different catch.

To dive deeper into our exploration of change, let's look at verse 14. It said, "this was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead." This makes me wonder... if they've already seen Jesus in the flesh twice, why is business going on as usual? Why are they fishing? Where is their mission work, their preaching, their teaching, and their sharing of the gospel that they've become known for?

Well, up to this point resurrection had been a technical change – namely Jesus was dead and now Jesus is alive. Technical changes are often more simplistic and easier to digest. After all, we often find it easier to take a pill rather than cultivate a life of wholeness and healthy living. But the thing is that while resurrection *can* be about technical change, resurrection is *almost always* about adaptive change.

And adaptive change is complex. Adaptive change is like when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Then Peter (in the same number of times he denied Jesus) affirmed his love for Jesus. After each affirmation, Jesus instructed Peter to feed and tend his flock. And this is a new reality, for Jesus has never sent anyone to feed Jesus' flock in John's gospel. In fact, the only other time we hear about sheep in John is when Jesus notes *his* relationship to the

sheep. This invitation was a change in how Peter saw himself and how he interacted with the world. For Peter, this was what kind of change – technical or adaptative? Adaptive change. This change was not easy, like throwing a net to the other side of the boat. Rather, Jesus was calling Peter to transform his identity. Instead of fishing, Peter would be invited to nurture a community, to reorient his life, and to embody the resurrection in an entirely new way.

And we as Christians are invited to do that same work as Peter, and I've seen that work alive here at Wicker Park Lutheran. In 2019, we began working on a comprehensive building plan to create a place that would better serve the community's needs and the needs of the next generation. We saw how some of the current architecture continues to be a barrier for full inclusion. Remediating that became a key part of our capital campaign called *A Place for All*. So far, we've created a plan and been raising money to install an elevator and ADA-accessible restrooms. In the end, this will be a tangible, necessary action that will yield immediate result. This is what type of change? Technical. But... this campaign has also invited us to rethink what it means to be a welcoming and inclusive community. Like Peter, we are being called to care for Jesus' flock. Like Peter, we are being called by God to be transformed from a place for some to a place of radical welcome and inclusion. Like Peter we are called to embrace adaptive change as we participate in God's holy vision.

And this work will not always be easy. We will find that welcoming people with diverse abilities will require us to reflect on what has been status quo in this place for 145 years for those of us who are able-bodied. It will mean that we take seriously how all can fully participate in God's work in this place. It

will require that we switch between adaptative and technical changes so that we might better join in God's vision for the world.

You see, the Easter season is about a substantial transformation that requires more than a tweak. Rather, resurrection is about a complete overhaul of our mind, body, and spirit. It's about realizing that our calling is not to ourselves, it's not to our neighborhood or city, and it's not only to our nation; rather, we are called to feel and tend all of God's sheep. And yes, we do that through the capital campaign, but we also do that in our daily lives. When we work to mend a strained relationship by changing how we approach conflict and empathize, that's God's adaptive resurrection. When we shift from ecologically destructive practices in fast fashion to acts of mending and reuse (like we'll explore in our time after church), that is God's transformational resurrection. When we align the way we live with our values and beliefs so that all might have a safety, food, and education, that is changing to share God's gift of abundant life for all.

Today we walk into the changes and challenges of life knowing that God is present with us... in this holy meal, in our baptismal calling, and in the world. We know that God gives us strength to adapt and the courage to embody the resurrection. Friends, *you* are sent to care for Christ's world following Christ's example. Let us continue to give thanks that we have a God that would change so that we might experience an abundance of life. Amen.