

Find the Lost, Build the Found, Follow Me

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There was a television show many years ago called MASH. It had to with medical unit in the Korean War and as serious as that conflict was, the show was a comedy, and a pretty good one at that. It had to its many credits, notable characters. One of the favorites of everyone was a fellow named Radar O'Reilly.

He got that name because he could anticipate what was needed in an uncanny ... and funny way. Because he did that anticipation for his commanding officer, he helped that colonel do well.

If we had a job description for Radar, it'd be "Help the colonel do well." His literal job description had, I'm sure, ten or twenty bullet points from punctuality to requisition this and that. How nice, and even better, was this simple job description – "Help the colonel do well."

If we could boil a job description down for you, or for us as a church, that was of that simple, helpful style, what would it be? You know what's great about a job description like that is it gives you guidance in the morning, a way of evaluating the day in the evening... it's flexible but orienting. We can remember it, use it. What would be that way for you or for us?

In Eastertide we're looking at the resurrection appearances and words, yea instructions, of Jesus. In those there is, of all things, a job description for us that I want to put in Radar O'Reilly job description like form.

Let's pray.

We know that there are different ways to convey truth. There is the truth that comes in proverb form, "Remember the ant...." There is truth that comes in fable form or parable form as with Aesop or Jesus. There is also truth that comes in story form or picture form and that is what we are given today.

We are looking at what the resurrected Jesus said and did. One of the things you'd expect him to give was marching orders ... here's our/your job *now*. And indeed he did, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them all I have commanded you, and I will be with you always." That is what we heard tangentially last week and that is what we hear this week more directly ... but in *story form* from the gospel writer, John.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, then these words: John 21:1-25

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: [2] Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. [3] "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

[4] Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

[5] He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

[6] He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

[7] Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. [8] The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. [9] When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

[10] Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

[11] Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. [12] Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."

None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. [13] Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. [14] This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[15] When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

[16] Again Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

[17] The third time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. [18] I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." [19] Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

[20] Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") [21] When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

[22] Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." [23] Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

[24] This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

[25] Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

The word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth, and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

The resurrected Jesus, rather simply, said, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Those are the marching orders. Those are the exact words in the Gospel of John. Those are the Great Commission words in Matthew. They come in Mark as, “Go and tell.” They’re in Luke as, “Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

John’s quote of Jesus, “So I send you,” is brief. He repeats and amplifies it through story that we can put in this Radar O’Reilly like way: “Find the Lost, Build the Found, and Follow Me.”

Finding the lost is in the fishing stories. He already has said that he would make them fishers of men and here they bring in, at his command, 153 fish (which some have said are the number of species in that sea and which represent the number of nations known in the world at that time). So in Luke Jesus says to go into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. In Matthew he says to go and make disciples of all nations.

In another place, Jesus said that when he is lifted up he will “haul” all men to himself (the same word there, “haul,” is used here in this story). The Great Commission speaks of making disciples, getting people “on board.” Without Jesus, without knowing of his resurrection, people are missing important information and companionship. They are losing out, lost. So find the lost is in this fishing story.

Building the found is the sheep story. They are to be fed. Three times Jesus says, “Feed my sheep.” The Great Commission speaks of *teaching* disciples to do all that I have

commanded. Teaching is building and feeding. First, get them on board, get them found. Second, develop them, build them.

Then there's, "Follow me." Find the Lost, Build the Found, Follow Me. "Follow me" is seen when Peter questions Jesus about the Beloved Disciple, "What about him?" Jesus said, "Follow me." Our main concern is not our comfort or others' activities, but that we are doing what Jesus says, that we are sensing him and staying close to him wherever he goes. Just like a tourist with a guide, an apprentice with a master, a running back with a blocker.

In Israel, in the packed tourist places with buses and buses and tourists and tourists, and not knowing where you're going, the guide has a bright yellow hat and a 9' pole with colored ribbons on it. You can see it above the crowd and you follow.

If you're an apprentice, say to a silversmith, you don't sit a half a mile away and observe the technique. You get close. Stay close to Jesus.

Find the Lost, Build the Found, Follow Me.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was LOST but _____? Found. Have you sung that song? Have *you* been found? Yup. Then when we say, "Find the Lost," that doesn't mean others looking for you. It means you looking for others. You've been found. The found look for the lost. We help those who don't have a relationship with God to have one. Once you're found it's, alas, not all about you anymore.

Oh, yes, we all always feel a little bit lost. But listen, if you were plucked from the ocean by a Coast Guard helicopter and you were disoriented, you were cold, you need fluids and hot tomato soup ... in all those ways you're not quite right yet. But categorically, you are not lost like the guy who is bobbing in the ocean a hundred miles from any known craft.

It's not all about you anymore. Churches often make decisions on the basis of what's good for their members. True. Not altogether wrong. But here we are saying that the members concern themselves for what non-members need to become members, to get on board.

That Coast Guard station isn't about having nice facilities for the crew, or boats that are their pleasure cruisers, or keeping them dry in inclement weather. They exist to find the lost.

Churches often have new member assimilation committees so that person comes a second and third and fiftieth time and become connected, responsible members. But you can't get a person here a second time if he or she has never been here a first time!

So we find the lost.

How do you and I help the lost be found? Often we'll hear people say, and I've said, and you've probably said, and said rightly, "I'm going to let my example do the talking." "I'm going to walk the walk and let that do the talking." And this is good, in as far it goes. Of course, there's the caveat that our walk will never be good enough and if we wait for it to be so, we'll always be waiting. Jesus' walk is good enough and it's about him really and not so much our walk. We're going to have to be imperfect and just like last week's sermon with the Great Commission, we note that disciples are scared, believing, doubtful, not up to their full strength, a day late and a dollar short, and Jesus gives them the Great Commission ANYWAY.

So we'll walk the talk and that is good, but insufficient. If anyone on the face of the planet, if anyone in human history, could have just his walk do the talking, let his example do the influencing without using words, it was Jesus. And yet Jesus found it necessary to use words. So you and I are going to need to use words.

But, I've thought about this a lot, I want to make this truly do-able for all of us. Stop being nervous if you are nervous. Here's how all of us can participate in finding the lost: tell people you'll pray for them. Invite people to church. An example would be, "Hey Joe, I heard you mention that struggle and I'll pray for you." That's it. Or, "Hey Joe, you like chili? We're having chili and cornbread at church next week. Why don't you come?" That's it.

Build the found. You get yourself and others here and I'll build you up. Deal? Getting you to get others here will build

you up. But I'll bring you and them Jesus and the Bible, Jesus and the Bible ... and you'll get built up.

You can build others up as well. Just your presence builds me up. Some of you so faithfully come that your diligence in coming in the face of adversity just plain encourages me. So I build you up, but we all can play a role in building.

Often times when I teach a class I'll say, "This is what I will do to help you and us grow. Now what will you do to help you and us grow?" We're not just passive in the growing process.

Follow me. I had some glasses once that were made of flexon. It was discovered in 1961, but not applied to glasses until 1988. Scientists banged on a test metal, broke for lunch, and when they came back, it had returned to its original shape. Unusual for a metal. But not unusual for human beings. We go back to our old shape.

That's what had happened for Peter. He, who had been with Jesus for three years, had witnessed the resurrected Jesus, had been sent out by him, and yet this Peter was going back to his old vocation, fishing. There's something that will pull us away from following and bring us back to doing life on our own. All of us have that tendency. May Jesus keep meeting us and pulling us into following him.

Here's something to note -- that old pattern, for Peter it was fishing, with all his expertise in it, it brought him what when he went back to it? What did it net him? Lots of toil *and no fish*. But following Jesus ... Look, full nets, and the net doesn't break. You're life, our life, won't break either as we follow. But it will be full.

One thing I'm pretty sure of and that's when we follow Jesus he'll lead us from being caught to catching, being fed to feeding, being led to leading.

Let's say I had a lovely dinner with my neighbors at my neighbors. They bought and prepared the food, set the table, did the clean up. I had a great time. I would love for that to happen every night. Because I like being a guest. But when we become Christians we move from being guests to being hosts. We go

from being caught to catching. From being fed to feeding. From being led to leading. It's the movement of the Christian life.

We'll always be a little of both – sheep and shepherds, being fed and feeding, being led and leading. Hey, this location on the Tiberian Sea comes up one other time in the gospel. It is the site of the feeding of the 5000. See, disciples eat the fish from Jesus *and* feed the multitudes. So the truth is, it isn't one or the other, but both *and*.

Find the lost, build the found, *and* follow me. We all want to get to heaven and hear those words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” But what do we do to hear the “done”? Now we know, Find the lost, build the found, and follow Jesus.

If you would like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you, the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call.

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