

# *Sermon: Easter 3*

The Rev. Hugh Dickinson

May 5, 2019

Year C  
Acts 9:1-6  
Psalm 30  
Revelation 5:11-14  
John 21:1-19

“Buttinsky,” a name that well suited him, that know-it-all on the shoreline! All night Peter, James, John and the others had been dropping their net off the side. From dusk until dawn they’d been at it with nothing to show—and this on top of their not having seen the risen one for weeks. A one or two-shot appearance he’d made, to show he’d survived Golgotha; but after that, never a follow-up. May as well, they figured, go back to their old occupation.

Now some stranger was barking orders at them as if a seasoned expert. “You haven’t caught anything yet, have you?” he yelled from the water’s edge. A lot of insight that took, seeing how high the dory was riding. “Why not drop the net off the other side?”

Thanks, mister, for the advice. Just what we need after wasting eight or nine hours!” Invasions into our lives can prove challenging. In a parish back east my family and I lived right next door to the church. One Saturday morning I was trying to erect some lattice wood panels to enclose our two or three trash cans.

Lattice wood, as you know, is quite thin and fragile. Each time I’d try driving in a nail to connect the sections together, the panel would split; and my temper would ramp up a notch.

To make matters worse, approaching me was a parishioner named John Laskey. He had driven his wife to altar guild duty, and now had some moments to spare. Knowing him for a non-stop talker, I dreaded having to deal with him. Not what I needed while botching a carpentry project.

Peter and the others, despite their edgy moods, decided to humor the stranger. Though it was well into daybreak, long past the good time for fishing, they let down the net where the know-it-all commanded. The rest of the story you've heard many times. The net almost broke with the catch. Then one of the men took a close look at the stranger and shouted "Good grief, it's the Lord!" They wound up the morning with two things accomplished: a load of sea perch, their original goal, plus reunion with the one they thought had deserted them.

As John Laskey drew nearer, I braced myself for one of his monologues. But instead he stepped behind me, took hold of my wrist, re-angled it slightly, and told me, "Now hit the nail." And it worked! The nail went into the lattice wood without damaging anything. Then, in an act uncharacteristic of him in the four or five years I had known him, he came back round in front of me, nodded approval and quietly walked away.

As the disciples ate and talked with the Master, they learned of their marching orders. "Feed my sheep," the Lord said to Peter," but he meant it for all of them. "Share the news of the kingdom, of death's failure to conquer, and show how it can turn around people's lives. Embolden the powerless, challenge the overlords, demonstrate the love that surpasses Caesar." From that day on they'd surrender their lives, secure in a greater treasure.

John Laskey's surprising behavior changed me in a couple of ways. It taught me, I hope, not to fight interruptions, for they just might become the agenda. As a so-called J-type, who likes to set plans and stick with them, I find that one hard to live by, but often rewarding. Even more, I've learned to perceive God at work through "buttinskies" the likes of John Laskey.

Hugh+