

In 1981 Australian author Morris West produced another insightful thriller called *“The Clowns of God.”* In it he featured the highly loving Jean Marie, the Pope who abdicates to maintain his spiritual integrity. Late in the story Jean Marie suffers a stroke, and is at first mentally and physically disabled.

At times he is patronised by doctors and nurses; talked down to like a small child. But he is much helped by a quiet, remarkable physiotherapist named Mr Atha. Nothing is too much trouble or too humble a task. The therapist slowly but surely leads Jean Marie out of disability and times of despair. Later, speaking with his friend, Carl, about Mr Atha, Jean Marie says:

“He’s very vague about himself - and a lot of other things as well. He says he comes from the Middle East. He was brought up in the Jewish tradition and he’s a non-believer. But, Carl, he’s a unique man. He’s young, as you can see. He can’t be older than his mid-thirties. Yet he has so much maturity, so much inner endurance. When I was at my lowest, I clung to him like a drowning man.....He slipped so easily into my life it was as if I had known him forever.”

Finally the true identity of Mr Atha is disclosed. He is Christ, come again among his people. A “non-believer” because he fully **knows!** A humble man helping people. Not some terrifying Being, trailing banners of fierce light, but a unique therapist, caring for broken bodies and souls.

My friends, Morris West has got it right! This is the Easter Christ whom we celebrate - the same Lord who got his hands dirty and fed his disciples by a camp fire on the shores of Galilee. This season of Resurrection shows us the same Jesus, and through him the same God whom we worship and are honoured to serve with all we have and are.

Glory be to the down-to-earth God! Involved with us here and now! With us and for us! Glory be to his Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who invites even us today to share his resurrection breakfast!

Amen!! Thanks be to God!!

*This sermon was preached by Rev Mark J Dunn at
St John’s Uniting Church
Cnr Mt Alexander Road and Buckley Street Essendon Victoria 3040
Home/Work Ph: 9375 1065 Mob: 0409 009 443 Email: mark@dunn.id.au
E-help: Rev Bruce D Prewer
www.stjohnsessenon.org.au
Enquiries about the Christian faith are always welcome.*



A Message from Mark!

Breakfast is Served

18 April 2010 - Easter 3
Scripture ~ John 21:9&12

When they landed they found a campfire going and fish and bread already cooking. “Come on,” said Jesus, “breakfast’s on.” Jn 21: 9 & 12 (The Aussie Bible)

It is a holy delight to read of Jesus, the risen, exalted Christ, cooking and serving a BBQ breakfast for his friends on the shore of Lake Galilee. Daybreak, a camp fire, the aroma of grilled fish, Jesus and some of his fishermen disciples. They breakfasted there together in wonderment.

TWO SPECIAL OCCASIONS

That scene triggers off in my memory two special occasions in my life - one more recent than the other.

In March '07 Jan & I were backpacking in Yunnan Province, South China. At the end of a hair raising six hours of horse-riding through some beautiful forests and local villages, two new friends and I were poled out to the middle of this massive shallow lake. We didn't realise it at first, but this was to rendezvous with a local fisherman who had been busily casting his net and was now barbecuing tiny 5cm long fish in his wooden canoe - on an open fire in an earthenware bucket! After the big ride, a snack of freshly caught and BBQ'd whole fish on a beautiful still lake in the mid-afternoon sun had never tasted so good.

The second incident, a decade earlier was in June 1997. I was travelling through the “Holy Land” with a group of Clergy towards the end of our UK ministry. We were staying overnight at the rather posh Carmel Jordan River Hotel right by the shore of Lake Galilee. Our group gathered around on a calm, balmy afternoon on the edge of a pebbly beach right near the hotel while I had the great honour of baptising a young Salvation Army officer, Lt Dawn Asker. It wasn't hard to think of Jesus as we shared that special sacramental moment and listened to the waves lapping the shore of the legendary lake.

A little later, from the 10th floor restaurant, we saw busy fishermen about 80 metres off shore, casting their nets in the traditional fashion. But they were catching nothing. Yet from our high vantage point, we could see a school of fish on the opposite side of the boat. If we could have spoken Arabic, we could have called out *“Cast the net on the other side of the boat and you will have some.”*

These two memories and associated feelings assist me to build a picture, and capture some of the atmosphere of that early morning long ago when the risen Jesus met again with disciples, to share a breakfast of freshly caught fish. Maybe my memories and your bright imagination will help you enter into the lake-side scene and sense the “vibes.”

Peter and John and a few other confused disciples had fished all night without taking anything. Just at daylight a man from the shore called out and directed them, in Aramaic, where to throw their nets. The resulting catch was immense. Then *“Coming ashore they found a charcoal fire, with fish lying on it, and some bread, and Jesus. He said: “Come and have breakfast.”* There is something commonplace yet truly awesome about this remarkable incident. It has mood and truth. It encapsulates the profound nature of the God we worship.

EMPEROR JESUS? It seems to me that many Christians have two different pictures of Jesus in their minds.

1) Firstly, there is the Jesus before his death. Humble, compassionate, friend of ordinary citizens, dinner guest of **“tax collectors and sinners,”** the man who has time for children, who talks about wild lilies and ravens, asks a Samaritan woman for a drink, washes the feet of his followers and forgives his enemies.

2) Then there is the second Jesus: The *Christus Victor*. Christ victorious. Triumphant over evil and death. This is the king all-powerful, majestic, fearsome in power, all seeing, all judging, aloof from the common crowd, impatient with his enemies ever *“victorious, happy and glorious, long to reign over us”* and who, at the end, will come to judge the living and the dead.

Maybe this worldly-majestic Lord evolved from the attempt by the first Christians to express the wonder and awe of seeing their crucified friend, now alive and irrepressible, and definitely on the *“godward side of reality.”*

But even more, this lofty, and often unapproachable, Christ, evolved when the faith was adopted by the Emperor Constantine and became the **“established church.”**

He then became seen as the Emperor of emperors, with absolute power and authority. If a common citizen came in the presence of Caesar on his knees and trembling, how much more should Christians come in fear and trembling before the Emperor of emperors.

COME AND HAVE BREAKFAST Emperor of emperors? Caste your mind back to the beach scene on the shore of Galilee. (OK - you need to delete the 10 storey Carmel Jordan River Hotel!) See the man on the shore tending a fire and cleaning fish, grilling them and serving them to his adoring disciples. The resurrection is the victory of the man who loved the common people and who refused to put on airs!

There on the shore, the *Christus Victor* says: *“Come and have some breakfast.”* We can sense how the disciples experienced awe, they grew quiet and at first felt awkward in his presence. But not terror. It’s natural to feel awe when one is present with the risen Christ. Awe is a healthy reaction to the holy Friend whom death cannot hold in its tomb. A unique Friend in whom one finds God awesomely present, is bound to bring a hush and a wonder.

Yet it is the same Jesus! Not a different model. Have you ever gutted, scaled and cooked fish on an open fire? It’s impossible to do that without getting your hands smelly and messy. That’s how it was with the risen Jesus. Our wonderful *Christus Victor* is a Lord with smelly hands, and smudges of charcoal on his face, who waits for his friends to join him for breakfast.

The God who comes to us in Christ is **always** this kind of God. Ours is a down-to-earth God, a humble God. Not a lofty God who, for appearances sake, acts a humble part from time to time, yet is glad to sneak off and clean up in secret, and get back to pomp and ceremony as soon as possible! But a God who loves rolling up his sleeves getting his hands dirty and who is being totally in character when serving others. The resurrection does not render incarnation void. The God we find in the risen and triumphant Christ is the same God who stays always **“down-to-earth.”** This is the same God who is that loving **“Other”** whom you will meet in the most common, and menial, and sometimes painful events of daily life like war and tragic accidents.