

Room for one more

By Pastor Huran Gatobu

United Methodist Church, Wallace

God is good, all the time. As we continue in Easter season, it is interesting to see how Jesus continued to appear to His followers. It is amazing how we can see the universality of the church in these appearances. John 21:1-14 tells how He appeared to his disciples by the sea of Tiberias which is also known as Sea of Galilee or Lake Gennesaret. Peter and six others had returned to the sea for fishing.

This is the place where it all began when Jesus called them to be His followers (Luke 5:1-11). Things seem not to have gone well. Jesus had been rejected and crucified. The disciples are not sure what will happen next to them or to the ministry which He had started. So they decided to go back to what was familiar, to what they knew best. Peter said, "I am going fishing." The others said, "we will go with you." That night they caught nothing.

It is surprising that they caught nothing because they were professional fishermen. They had been fishing for a living and for business. They knew the right time when fish were biting and they knew the right bait to throw. But that night they caught nothing. It was their dark night fishing.

It reminds me of what the psalmist says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who will build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guards keep watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and stay up late toiling for food to eat for he grants sleep to those He loves (Psalm 127:1-2)

When they involved the risen Lord, they were able to catch something. He came to them early in the morning. At first they did not recognize him. Jesus told them where to throw their nets. The catch was great. John says there were 153 fish and the net was not torn. This is symbolic of the universality of the church.

According to Jerome who was a fourth century biblical scholar, there were 153 different kinds of fish in the sea. The big catch of 153 is an indication that the church is able to accommodate all kinds of people. And just as the net was not torn, the church will not be broken by all kinds of people who come in.

In Kenya, Africa, there is a public transportation vehicle called Matatu. The Matatu transports people from one place to another. A regular Matatu is supposed to carry about 12 people. However, those Matatu can take as many as 30 people.

The passengers sit and lean on each other and nobody gets out until they get to their destination. And on the way to their destination, the driver will stop to pick more people. It is very common to hear the driver calling, "Come in, there is room for one more." In other words the Matatu never gets filled up.

That has become symbolic of the church, "Come in, there is room for one more."

Just like the Matatu carries people of all sizes, colors, background, class and it is not broken, in

the same way, the church can accommodate all kinds of people and it will not break. The good news is, just as the net was not torn with 153 fish, the church is not torn, no matter who comes in.

The church is composed of great multitudes of people from every nation, and tribes and languages and at one time they will all stand before the throne of God (Revelation 7:9)

Like Peter and those other disciples, we have one time or another spent time in the dark night fishing. It may not have been literal fishing but spiritual fishing. We have spent time looking for answers, looking for our place in life or in ministry or just seeking for some peace. Sometimes we do not get what we are looking for. Like the disciples, we catch nothing.

It is in those moments of emptiness that our risen Lord always comes and directs us on where to throw our nets.

As we go through this Easter season may we be able to obey the Lord's guidance.