

Practice Resurrection: Do you Love Jesus?

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Easter 3 Fort Hill Presbyterian Church

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Scripture: John 21:1-19

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. ⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know

everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Proclamation of The Word

My husband and I used to watch the TV show LOST religiously. We do not have *tivo* or a DVR. Before the days of *hulu* and online episodes, we had to plan to be home at 9:00 on Tuesday nights. This particular show has a way of leaving loose ends and a huge twist right at the very end, so one is usually surprised or confused at best. Someone is alive who was thought dead, someone else is evil who was thought to be good, you know the formula. But the best part of the show is the “scenes”. At the end of every show, you see a few snippets of next week’s show that might help you out of your dazed confusion...which is where I always landed at the end of an episode. If one of us left the room, the other would call, “You’re about to miss the scenes.” The scenes are the best part!

Today’s scripture passage functions somewhat like those “Scenes”. In fact, John’s gospel has appeared to wrap it up a few verses before our reading today. John 20:30-31 tells us the purpose of the whole gospel of John, It reads,

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

It sounds like a conclusion. In fact, it is the conclusion of the Story of Thomas, the passage we heard preached on last week. Jesus reveals himself after the resurrection to his disciples. The writer John tells us why he has written these things, so that believing you may have life in his name. Then we discover these “scenes” of a fishing expedition gone bust, followed by Jesus instructing them to try again and finding a huge catch. Then Jesus has cooked breakfast on the beach. Finally, Jesus reconciles with Peter, the disciple who has denied him three times before his crucifixion.

Why does John add the scenes, a postscript of sorts to a perfectly good finish? Sound like any preachers or professors you know? You think she has wound up

for the big finish and then there appears to be another ending. Today's passage is the postscript or the scenes for a post-resurrection reality.

It appears that the resurrection has past and the disciples find themselves returning to a normal day....picking up their nets and instead of sitting around thinking 'now what?' Peter says, "I'm going fishing!" and the others follow. Many of us handle change this way. After the loss of a loved one, an end to a long anticipated task like graduation, or completion of the semester, we ask "now what?" We think "I'll keep myself busy, keep myself occupied." Maybe they are just hovering together not knowing exactly what to do...Nathaneal was from the hill country and was not an experienced fisherman. Maybe they were all just hungry and realized they had to make a living.

I imagine, ol' Peter is sorting a few things out himself. Before the cross, Peter denied Jesus 3 times. He may have a few demons of his own to wrestle with-some remorse. Although things turned out well in the end, he never reconciled with Jesus over his mistakes. He may have gone fishing to avoid dealing with the "what next" questions or to ponder the "if only" questions.

So the workers go back to work doing what they did before even though the whole world has shifted. After an unsuccessful night of fishing, Jesus is there on the shore, just about 100 yards away. The bible says it was just before daybreak. That reminds me of Psalm 30 "weeping last for the night but joy comes in the morning." Jesus is the joy that comes as the night ends. John recognizes him saying, "It is the Lord." And they haul in a boat-load of fish.

Peter is so excited to see Jesus he jumps in the water and runs to Jesus. He is only about 100 yards away. He is watching from a distance and invites them to have breakfast- a breakfast of bread and fish....a reminder of the abundance of the feeding of the 5000 with 5 loaves and two fish. They bring what they can to the table so to speak and share with one another...just like the good 'ol days.

The whole gospel of John is written so that you may believe and so that you might have life as stated in John 20:31. If the life, death and resurrection is about salvation, Jesus' post-resurrection is about our sanctification. Sanctification is the living out of faith once one has been made right or justified with God. If salvation is the gift offered to us by grace through faith in Jesus the Messiah, then sanctification is our response. Or another way to say it is that we are "saved for service." The resurrection did not make life painless or perfect. God does not promise life without struggle. And as we consider the events of this week alone, we might be overwhelmed with misery.

The lives of miners lost in an accident

The hopes of the Polish people crash in an airplane

The people of China dealing with another earthquake

Unemployment soars at 12.2% in the state of SC

Not to mention the news of friends and neighbors dealing with pain,
Heart-ache, budget cuts, health struggles

We live in a world in need of good news expressed in small acts of love: a cup of cold water, a bite of bread, a word of peace and comfort, the gift of enough strength for today. Recently Cal Sawyer shared some Woody Guthrie lyrics with us pastors during Holy week. It holds the honesty and truth of the fact that there is no Easter Alleluia without the Good Friday cross. The song is entitled...

God's Promises

I didn't promise you skies painted blue
Not all colored flowers all your days through
I didn't promise you, sun with no rain
Joys without sorrows, peace without pain.

All that I promise is strength for this day,
Rest for my worker, and light on your way.
I give you truth when you need it, my help from above,
Undying friendship, my unfailing love.

I never did promise you crowns without trials,
Food with no hard sweat, your tears without smiles,
Hot sunny days without cold wintry snows,
No vict'ry without fightin', no laughs without woes.

All that I promise is strength for this day,
Rest for my, worker, my light on your way,
I give you truth when you need it, my help from above,
Undying friendship, my unfailing love.

I sure didn't say I'd give you heaven on earth,
A life with no labor no struggles no deaths,
No earthquakes no dryspells, no fire flames no droughts,
No slaving no hungers, no blizzards no blights.

All that I promise is strength for this day,
Rest for my worker, my light on your way,
I give you truth when you need it, my help from above,
Undying friendship, my unfailing love.

I promise you power, this minute this hour,
The power you need when you fall down to bleed,
I give you my peace, and my strength to pull home
My love for all races all creeds and all kinds.

My flavors my saviors my creeds of all kinds,
My love for my saviors, all colors all kinds,
My love for my races all creeders all kinds,
My saviors my flavors my dancers all kinds,

My dancers my prancers my singers all kinds,
My flavors my saviors my dancers all kinds.

(with thanks to Cal Sawyer who sent this song to me as recorded by Ellis Paul.
Lyrics penned by Woody Guthrie
http://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/Gods_Promise.htm)

The disciples are living in a post resurrection, but much of their world looks the same. It appears that their decision to go back to normal, to go fishing, was a default option. They were not exactly sure about the “now what?” and the “what next?” Jesus’ appearance on the beach, eating with the disciples is to remind them how to live out that faith- now, now that he is empowering them by the Spirit.

Jesus feeds them. Then Peter gets his 2nd chance. In a parallel 3 fold questioning, Peter is redeemed from his 3 fold mistake of denying Jesus. He is working out his salvation. He can now respond to God’s grace through Jesus. He can respond in love and service. He is saved to serve.

While it looks tagged on at the end, sometimes the “scenes” from next week’s tv show or the post script of the letter is the most important part. I have over 100 letters that my father wrote to my mother while they were dating each one finished off with “P.S. I Love You.” Sometimes the postscript sums up the purpose of the whole letter.

I am writing you a message so that in believing you might have life, says the gospel writer, but the postscript says it best,

“Do you love me?” says Jesus,

“Feed my sheep.”

Practice resurrection and follow me