

Breakfast With Jesus©

John 21:1-19

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As we think about his passage today, I want you to especially be reflecting on these things:

- *Jesus asked Peter three times:*
 - “do you love me?”
- And Three times Peter answered
 - “yes, Lord! You know I love you!”
- And three times Jesus said to Peter:
 - “Feed/shepherd my sheep”
- **Our Reflection Questions:**
 1. Do you think Jesus asks Peter whether he loves him three times to embarrass Peter, after all, Peter had been the one who denied knowing Jesus that night after his arrest – not just one time, but three times he denied him, just as Jesus had predicted;
 2. Or did he ask him in order to strengthen Peter’s conviction, or to assure him of his love and forgiveness?
 3. What affect do you think it has on Peter to hear Jesus tell him three times to "feed my sheep"?

Those are things I think we should consider in this passage and then, of course, what in the world does it have to do with us today?

So, while I have come to know a lot about many of you, I still feel like we are getting to know each other. I have no idea how many of you are fishermen (or people). Do you enjoy fishing? Do you do it often?

What type of fish do you specifically like to fish for? Does it require any special knowledge? Like – how deep do those fish dwell? What bait do you use? What kind of pole and line would you use for that particular fish?

I admit it. I am not a fisherman (or woman). I have either gotten sea sick when fishing, or just plain bored and impatient with fishing. I’ve really not had a great deal of success any of the few times I’ve gone fishing.

Yet, here is Simon Peter and John (who calls himself the “one whom Jesus loves” (not too much self confidence there, huh?) and a few other disciples who have decided to get on with life.

“I am going fishing,” says Peter. It was what he did before he met Jesus and it is the only thing he really knows outside of the ministry he had with Jesus.

And the others agree. “We will go too.” They say.

But they go out for the night, with no luck. I’m not sure what kind of fishing happens at night. Do you know?

I know that when we lived at Carolina Beach right on the beach for six months, we would wake up at the crack of dawn to the sound of the shrimp boats heading out – going out to sea to fish for shrimp.

I loved hearing that sound of the motors of those boats. I would sometimes get up and watch them with the sun rising up over the ocean in the east. We had front row seats to the sunrises there.

It was comforting and somewhat reassuring to know those shrimpers were going out for the catch of the day – especially because I loved shrimp so much that the first 3 months we lived there I would stop at Micheals Sea Food Market and pick up some fresh, steamed shrimp every evening on my way home!

I was glad to know they were continuing to supply my shrimp resource every day!

But the disciples – they were out at night. And coming in at the crack of dawn. With nothing in their nets.

And here is a stranger on the banks calling out to them “Did you catch anything?” “Nope” they said, downhearted.

“Try putting your nets down on the other side of the boat.” This stranger suggested.

And we know the story. They did. And they had more fish than they could hardly drag in. John says there were 153 large fish!

And then the beloved disciple recognizes Jesus. “It is the Lord!” he exclaims. This, John tells us is the 3rd time Jesus shows himself as the resurrected Lord to his disciples.

Peter, who has taken off some of his outer garments for fishing, puts on his proper clothes and dives in to the water, swimming toward the shore and to the Lord.

And here is Jesus. The bonfire is burning with the fish frying in the pan over the hot coals. Bread is waiting there to fill their stomachs, as well. And Jesus invites them to come and eat breakfast; to bring in the haul of fish and add to the meal with their own catch.

Of course it reminds us of other stories. Jesus calling the disciples to follow him. "I will make you fishers of men." He said, and they dropped their nets and followed him.

The feeding of the crowd of 5,000 people with a few fish and loaves of bread.

It even has some resemblance of the Last Supper the disciples had shared with Jesus – the Eucharist – the Communion service.

What a thrill! To be in the presence of the risen Lord – their master, their teacher; their friend; But now the one they know is truly the risen Christ – the Messiah of God!

Can't you just imagine the fun, the conversation, the sharing of memories of the past, the emotions of being together again?

But then, he gets kind of personal. And he asks Peter:

"Do you love me, more than these?"

We wonder – more than these - what?

Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?

Do you love me more than these other occupations – fishing included?

Do you love more than anything else – I think is what he is really asking.

And Peter's heartfelt answer is "Yes, Lord. You know I love you!"

Jesus says, "Then feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep."

So what was it? Was Jesus somehow getting back at Peter for denying knowing him 3 times that night when Jesus was arrested.

Jesus had told Peter, after Peter had declared that he would die for Jesus, he said, "Before the cock crows three times, you will deny knowing me."

And it was true.

Can't you imagine how humiliated and ashamed Peter felt?

It must have been rather uncomfortable for Peter, with Jesus risen from the dead, to be in the presence of the person he had said three times he didn't even know.

So, was Jesus getting even – trying to embarrass him? Trying to put him down somehow?

It's kind of a matter of perspective, isn't it?

But I think Jesus asking Peter this question – not once – but three times – giving Peter the opportunity to declare his love for Jesus – three times – was Jesus' way of canceling out the shameful times Peter denied him.

Forgiveness is about canceling out our sin. Jesus was assuring Peter his sin was wiped out.

But then, just as Peter had promised Jesus, before his death, that he would die for Jesus, now Jesus is promising him that indeed, he would be one of those who would lose his life for the Lord; for the faith; for the Christian way.

¹⁸ "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to Peter, "when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others ^f will dress you and take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

John says, "¹⁹ Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me."

So, what do you think this means to us today? Not too many of us are fishermen – at least not fishing for our living. Can we relate to these disciples who were fishermen – who met the Lord and had breakfast with him on the beach?

Could the fishing symbolize Jesus commission to his church to go fishing – to do evangelism? And what does that mean? To tell the world – the nations – about the good news of the risen Christ?

There is so much language that we could grab hold of in this fishing language. Using the nets to haul in those Jesus has told us to catch.

The large number of 153 fish could symbolize the all the nations, all the people around who we might just “haul in” for the Lord.

But I do think for the disciples of Jesus (the Church), it is important to know who we are fishing for. Not that we wouldn't welcome anyone into our fold – of course we would!

But if we have focus on a particular group to enlarge our nets – or our membership – a focus that might ensure the future growth of the church – then we would need to know specifically who those people (or fish) are.

Perhaps they are young adults with children. We seem to always we talking about wanting and needing more families.

So if they were the proverbial fish we were wanting to catch, we would need to figure out what speaks to them; what attracts them; what keeps them here; what language is life-giving and transforming; what not only fulfills their spiritual needs but gives them opportunity to pay it forward – to pass it on?

Perhaps the fishing analogy has to do with the great commission Jesus gave the disciples (which include us today – to go and make disciples of all nations.) If this isn't evangelism, then I don't know what we would call it!

But then, Jesus also said, “Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.”

I think this indicates that, once we have brought in those fish, or lambs now, we are to take care of them – not just with food with but spiritually.

So, we have 2 commissioning calls in this passage: bring in the nets and Feed my lambs.

How are we doing? If we bring in the big haul, the great number of fish – do we know what fish we are targeting? Do we know where to find them? How to attract them?

But when they are here, do we know how to feed them? Do we know what they are longing for, hungry for?

Are we willing to change some things in order to accomplish this commission? That is, what to change what we do in seeking others; what we do in worship that might speak their language better; what we do in offering studies and fellowship?

And are we willing to make sacrifices and changes in how we receive and take of; feed these new lambs?

Question is, how far with we go; how deep do we want to search; how willing are we to change the bait – the ways we attract; and to change what we do to feed those lambs?

We talk about change and about growth. But are we sincerely interested in making disciples for Christ? Are in really passionate about handing the faith to them?

And are we willing to make changes so that they can continue to be fed – week after week, month after month?

To grow means to change. But I think it is the other way as well. To change means to grow.

The question is: Do you love Christ more than these? More than the old ways we've always done things? More than protecting and keeping everything for ourselves; everything the same?

Do you love Christ enough to be willing to tell others; to seek their interests; to give them the good news message?

Yes? "Then," Jesus says, "Feed my sheep."

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