

Sunday, April 10
Third Sunday of Easter

John 21:1-19

¹After [he appeared to his followers in Jerusalem,] 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."

Dear Disciples of the Risen Lord:

Jesus said to Peter: Do You Love Me? Follow Me.

When we encounter Jesus, we are changed and will never be the same. Jesus can be revealed in a blinding light on the road, in an abundance of fish, at breakfast or on the beach. God uses all sorts of surprising things—bread, wine, water, words of forgiveness—to convert us. Like baptism, this conversion is both a once-in-a-lifetime, life-changing event and a daily process—a change that comes again and again, like Jesus’ question to Peter: “Do you love me?” Again and again, Jesus calls us to follow him.¹

For Saul, the journey doesn’t end with the blinding light on the road. For Peter, the journey doesn’t end with breakfast on the beach. Conversion puts each of them, and each of us, on a path that continues for the rest of our life on earth—and leads into life eternal.

In the gospel, it is the resurrected Jesus coming to the disciples and bringing them to faith, again.

In the reading from Acts, it is Ananias who is sent to care for Saul in his time of blindness. Everyone had someone who helped them to follow the path of faith.

It is only a short time after the crucifixion and the resurrection, and already the disciples seem to have forgotten Jesus and return to the lives they left when they first followed him.

¹ <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#resources> 3rd Sunday of Easter Overview 2016.

Like every Sunday morning, worship may touch people, but then we need to confront the reality of how soon Monday comes and the rush of life takes over. Still, Jesus continues to seek out the disciples, feeding them and sending them out. This is what happens as the Holy Spirit gathers God's people for worship.

This happens as Jesus gives himself in the bread and wine. This happens as the hungry are fed, the homeless given shelter, and the sick healed. We may forget, we may try to return to ordinary life, but Jesus continues finding us, feeding us, and sending us out for service in his name. These are opportunities to keep the Sunday experience alive during the whole week. These are the opportunities to share with others our journey with Jesus.

Three times in a row the risen Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" By the third time you can almost hear the pain and frustration in Peter's voice. As difficult as this may have been, you might say everyone is asked the same question each day. Do you love Jesus? ²

We answer that question in our relationships with children and parents, spouses, friends, and co-workers. We answer that question as we spend our money and buy our food and tip wait staff. We answer that question when we forgive others and when we do not forgive. We answer with our lives, with both Yes and No. Our answer to Jesus question is not theoretical but it is existential!

Jesus says to Peter "Follow me" after asking Peter three time if he "Loved Jesus."

The life of discipleship starts with a question about our love for Jesus and moves to answering to this question with the answer to the call to follow Jesus.

² <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#resources> Theological Reflection

Our love for Jesus is not theoretical, it is manifested concretely when we rise and follow him. That is what Peter needed to understand, that he was invited to answer Jesus not only with words but with a life of discipleship following the way of Jesus, even when that life can mean for Peter the sacrifice of his own life.

Every Christian and every congregation is challenged in the same way that Peter was challenged with the questions and the call to follow Jesus.

We need to evaluate our love to Christ and our commitment to follow the same Christ every day and season.

This is the reason why we need to check the following if we consider the question:

Do we regularly think and talk about what it means to serve one another and follow Jesus—and that it is more than just raising funds or food for this cause or that charity, but it is finding ways to build connections with people?

How do you as part of this congregation not only help others, but build Christ-centered relationships with others?³

For this reason, the question if we love Jesus is our congregational and personal question always. Because we need to see our ministry as a ministry that is the result of our love for Jesus. Whatever we do should be an expression of our love for Jesus. And, secondly, the way we serve, talk, share, and preach should be an expression of our decision to follow Christ. But, as Jesus told Peter, we have a personal and congregational pastoral ministry, we need to shepherd the people of God, we need to shepherd the people that God has redeemed. This is the

³ <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#resources>

mutual ministry that we need to practice among ourselves and also the pastoral care that we, as followers of Jesus, need to put in action offering our love for Jesus as an answer to the absence of love and care that the world experience today.

Think, for this reason, about the ways in which we feed Jesus' lambs and attend Jesus' sheep as he asks Peter to do so to show his love? Are we intentional about doing this and teaching our children, youth, friends and neighbors to develop lives of service? Are we showing them that our love for Jesus open our doors to love them and that to follow Jesus also means to follow Jesus' life of praying and care for the people that are in need to know the love of Christ?

Those are important questions to consider when we think about our love for Christ and the invitation to follow him on a daily basis.

All these previous questions can sound us extremely challenging and maybe discouraging if we see that the demands of discipleship are high and that to follow Jesus is not an easy enterprise, but we should remember that we are not alone on this journey. Jesus is walking the same roads and sailing with us in the same boat.

“Hearing that the disciples cast their net on the right side of the boat as the risen Christ instructs them, we may be stirred to remember that the disciples never catch a fish in any of the Gospels without the help of Christ”.⁴

The original readers and hearers of John's Gospel probably knew the traditions of the disciples having nothing to show for their labors until Christ guided them.

⁴ Feasting on the Word Year C. V. 2 p. 423

We, like them, know that if we are going to fulfill the mission entrusted to us, we will need the risen Christ guiding and feeding us.

When we hear Jesus asking Peter three times if Peter loves him, we recall Christ's prediction that Peter would deny him three times and the sad scenes in which the prediction was fulfilled.

The Gospel wants to show us that far "more important than Peter's denials is the grace of God, the divine willingness to engage and entrust the ministry, even to someone whose life so far has been marked by impetuosity and denial."⁵

The beginning of the Gospel of John is marked by the affirmation that "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."⁶

The ending of the same Gospel "awakens the memories of the darkness- the darkness of our hunger, the darkness of our failure to recognize Christ, the darkness of our denial- but at the same time it reminds us that none of this darkness has overcome the light. For the risen Christ still feeds, still empowers even doubters and deniers for the ministry."⁷

Yes to love Jesus and to follow Jesus to the point of a life of sacrifice is just an impossible enterprise if we think that we can do that trusting only in our wisdom, strength and resources. But the story started with the message that we need to cast our nets where Jesus wants us to do it.

5 Feasting on the Word.p. 425

6 John 1, 5

7 Feasting On the Word. P. 425

For many years churches and leaders have made plans trusting in their ability, wisdom or the experience of consultants. The results have been questionable and in many ways discouraging.

All this is clearly exposed in today's Gospel lesson because we can see clearly that the disciples could not fish without Jesus guidance.

The same Jesus that questioned Peter if he loved him is the same Jesus that invited Peter to follow him, but it is also the same Jesus who provided the information where the disciples needed to cast their nets to fish successfully.

We are in the same situation as the disciples were. We are questioned about our love for Jesus, we are invited to follow Jesus and also we need to remember that we can only be successful on this journey if we cast our nets where Jesus wants us to cast them.

This means listening carefully to the voice of God coming to us in word and Sacrament and opening our hearts and minds to a humble discernment of where we should cast our nets.

Before making plans and strategies we need to embrace prayer and meditation. Before trusting in our investments we need to open our hearts and minds to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Before worrying about our limitations we need to celebrate that God in Christ can use limited poor people to fish people and bring new disciples to God's Kingdom.

This is the meaning of Easter: an empty tomb, a resurrected Lord coming back and gathering his disciples, and a Saviour that is guiding and providing direction to his community about how they should fish for people.

Applying this to our personal journey means that we need to remember always that love for Jesus means always to follow Jesus, and to follow Jesus means to trust in Jesus' words. If you are dealing with questions, uncertainty and challenging times. See in these situations the opportunity to rediscover the power and presence of the risen Christ that can see your limitations, your vulnerability and your frustrations.

Then you can remember the Gospel teaching today. Peter said:

“I am going fishing.” The other disciples said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Maybe you feel the same frustration that Peter and the disciples felt. You worked hard but you caught nothing! But this is not the end. The risen Christ will come to you early in the morning and will tell you “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” Yes Jesus is always near, we just need to remember and to trust in his word. After a long night fighting and failing, there is a new morning waiting to see the Lord coming with a word of salvation and fresh new beginnings. Then you will have the opportunity to share the blessings during your faith journey with your neighbors and friends.

God be with you.

He is risen. He is risen indeed!