

Lesson for Thursday, Apr 28 & Sunday, May 1, 2022

GOSPEL: John 21: 1-19

"Fishing/Do You Love Me"



Context

"Peter has been ambiguously portrayed throughout John's gospel—a **potential** leader rather than Jesus' heir apparent. This may reflect questions the community harbored regarding Peter's fitness to be their leader. Peter's reputation is in shambles after denying Jesus three times. How could the disciples be expected to trust Peter to lead them, especially since Peter had **pledged** to follow Jesus to his death, even promising to die for Jesus' sake? John 21 addresses Peter's trustworthiness, and three key components of trustworthiness (ability, integrity, and benevolence) can help us see how Peter is appraised." *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/second-sunday-of-easter-3/commentary-on-john-2019-31-9 by Rene Such Schreiner)*

Insight

"In this scene, Jesus asks Peter three times whether he loves him. Three times. Imagine if someone you care about asked whether you really love him/her not once, not twice, but three times. Painful. And Peter is, indeed, hurt by this repetition. I suspect that only later did it sink in that Jesus is not testing Peter but reinstating him to the community of believers by allowing him to confess faith the same number of times he denied faith earlier. Jesus is drawing Peter back into a community to which he belongs and accepts him for whom he is.

Second, we all need a sense of purpose, the belief that what we do matters, that if we did not show up people would notice. Purpose, as it turns out, is one of the great motivators in the

world. More powerful than money or fame or power, believing that you have something of value to contribute draws us again and again into challenging circumstances with joy.

And so in response to each of Peter's confessions, Jesus responds by giving him good work to do: feed my sheep. Be a leader. Look out for these others. Devote yourself to this community. Peter is reinstated into the community of the faithful and given a sense of belonging, and then he is given good work to do and given a purpose." *(Excerpts from davidlose.net/2016/04/easter-3-c-two-things-everyone-needs/l)*

Gospel Reading

"After this, Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time at the Tiberias Sea (the Sea of Galilee). This is how he did it: Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the brothers Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. Simon Peter announced, "I'm going fishing." The rest of them replied, "We're going with you." They went out and got in the boat. They caught nothing that night. When the sun came up, Jesus was standing on the beach, but they didn't recognize him. Jesus spoke to them: "Good morning! Did you catch anything for breakfast?" They answered, "No." He said, "Throw the net off the right side of the boat and see what happens." They did what he said. All of a sudden there were so many fish in it, they weren't strong enough to pull it in. Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Master!" When Simon Peter realized that it was the Master, he threw on some clothes, for he was stripped for work, and dove into the sea. The other disciples came in by boat for they weren't far from land, a hundred yards or so, pulling along the net full of fish. When they got out of the boat, they saw a fire laid, with fish and bread cooking on it. Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you've just caught." Simon Peter joined them and pulled the net to shore—153 big fish! And even with all those fish, the net didn't rip. Jesus said, "Breakfast is ready." Not one of the disciples dared ask, "Who are you?"

They knew it was the Master. Jesus then took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus had shown himself alive to the disciples since being raised from the dead. After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Master, you know I love you." Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep." Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I'm telling you the very truth now: When you were young you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished, but when you get old you'll have to stretch out your hands while someone else dresses you and takes you where you don't want to go." He said this to hint at the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And then he commanded, "Follow me." The Message

What It Could Mean?

"Benevolence is essential to trustworthiness: someone may be **able** and **willing** to do something, and actually **do** it, but knowing **why** reveals interests and values; benevolence reflects an **alignment** of interests and values.

Because John sees love (love of Jesus, leading to love of others) as the root of profound risk-taking benevolence (15:8-13), our final question could be put this way: Does Peter love Jesus enough to lead the community? Hence, the three love interrogations from Jesus: motive matters! Will Peter act out of self-interest, or love of Jesus and other? This component is so important that Jesus interrogates the depth of Peter's love (21:15-17) before he "vouches" for him via his prophecy (21:18-19). Out of love for Jesus, Peter's self-interests will be

overcome, and he will "go where he does not wish to go" in suffering death for the life of the community.

At a time when the trustworthiness of churches and their ministries is no longer a given, the resurrection narratives provide a warrant, even a mandate, for self-appraisal. A practical tutorial on these skills are echoed in a opening quote from Walter Anderson: "We're never so vulnerable than when we trust someone – but paradoxically, if we cannot trust, neither can we find love or joy." Following the risen Jesus is a trust-based act of vulnerability (rather than self-preservation) that, paradoxically, emboldens us to "go out" with joy and renewed vocation." (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org, Revised Common Lectionary, by Rene Such Schreiner*)

Readings for Further Study

- **Psalm 95:7 & John 10:11/9** "We are the flock under his care/Jesus is both Good Shepherd and Door of the sheepfold"
- **1 Peter 2:2 & Hebrews 5: 12-14** Shepherds of God's people are to provide their flock with the pure milk of the Word of God so they can move on to the meat and solid food to be spiritually mature

Thought for the Day

"Agape love is selfless love...the love God wants us to have isn't just an emotion but a conscious act of the will—a deliberate decision on our part to put others ahead of ourselves. This is the kind of love God has for us." ~ *Billy Graham*

A Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you that you see beyond the limitations of our everyday, familiar lives. You heal us and send us out to new adventures. Help us to say with Peter, "You know everything Lord, you know that I love you," and then to step out boldly where you are leading. **Amen.**