

May 5, 2019 | Easter 3

Out of Love – Go Fish

Ancient Reading ~ *John 21:1-19*

Later, Jesus was again manifested to the disciples at Lake Tiberias. This is how the appearance took place. Assembled were Simon Peter, Thomas “the Twin,” Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s children, and two other disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I’m going out to fish.” “We’ll join you,” they replied, and went off to get into their boat.

All through the night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus was standing on the shore, though none of the disciples knew it was Jesus. He said to them, “Have you caught anything, friends?” “Not a thing,” they answered. “Cast your net off to the starboard side,” Jesus suggested, “and you’ll find something.” So they made a cast and caught so many fish that they couldn’t haul the net in. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved cried out to Peter, “It’s the Teacher!” Upon hearing this, Simon Peter threw on his cloak — he was naked — and jumped into the water.

Meanwhile the other disciples brought the boat to shore, towing the net full of fish. They were not far from land — no more than a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw that a charcoal fire had been prepared, with fish and some bread already being grilled. “Bring some of the fish you just caught,” Jesus told them. Simon Peter went aboard and hauled ashore the net, which was loaded with huge fish — one hundred fifty-three of them. In spite of the great number, the net was not torn.

“Come and eat your meal,” Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared to ask, “Who are you?” — they knew it was the savior. Jesus came over, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This marked the third time that Jesus had appeared to the disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had eaten their meal, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” Peter said, “Yes, Rabbi, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

A second time Jesus put the question, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter said, “Yes, Rabbi, you know that I love you.” Jesus replied, “Tend my sheep.”

A third time Jesus asked him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked, “Do you love me?” a third time. So he said, “You know everything, Rabbi. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

“The truth of the matter is, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you get old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will put a belt around you and take you where you don’t want to go.” With these words, Jesus indicated the type of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then the savior said, “Follow me.”

Second Reading ~ adapted from Walter Brueggemann
in *"Reality, Grief, and Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks"*

Abuse of the vulnerable neighbor is an affront to God and a violation of Torah. On the other hand, such abuse is an unsustainable policy. In the act itself there arises destructiveness and costly consequences to the body of society. Thus, believing we are exceptional (greater, superior) comes to violate the two great commandments: love of God, and love of neighbor. Exceptionalism imagines divine guarantees, so that one need not answer to the divine will. The resultant entitlement depends upon insensitivity to the need or even the presence of the neighbor. The disregard of both God and neighbor permits a predatory society to seem normal and acceptable. And because it is situated in such an ideology, "normal" predation comes to be beyond criticism. The prophetic tradition, however, imagines an alliance of God and neighbor against such acquisitive exploitation, so that there is no possibility of loving God without loving neighbor.

Third Reading ~ adapted from *"The Collected Sermons of Fred Craddock"*

"Would you repeat the question?" "Yes. Do you love me?" "Yes, you know that I love you." "Then tend my lambs and feed my sheep." In that assignment, Easter is translated into life, and resurrection morning is made meaningful every morning. I don't mean to get sentimental. It's a tough assignment. To tend my lambs is to face the fact that some are going to stay lambs for forty years and never become sheep. Feed my sheep. Not simple at all. Some of them refuse to eat.