

May 1, 2022

3rd Easter Year C

Acts 9: 1-6

Psalm 30

John 21: 1-19

John 21:1-19

Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon 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.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He 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. That 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. But 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.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So 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. Jesus 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. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When 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." A 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." He 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. Very 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." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we see Peter and his friends embarking on a night of fishing, returning to what they know, leaning on the familiar in the chaos and the fragments of hope they have experienced since the death of Jesus. Since the devastation of the arrest and execution of Jesus, hope has come in fragments, but not at all what they had, well, hoped for. Those closest to Jesus have had to finally let go of their hope for a Jesus who is the conquering Messiah, coming to free them from Roman rule. Those closest to Jesus are lifted up by the moments they have seen him, coming into their fearful locked rooms and saying, "Peace be with you", showing them his wounds, listening to their doubts, knowing their pain, and appearing too as the gardener, ready to plant and feed. But those closest to Jesus must finally let go of their ragged last hopes for a Messiah with a mighty sword, and see right in front of them their Messiah still carrying his wounds, who comes with "Peace" on his lips. This is a lot for Peter and the others to take in and so, they do something they understand, a bit of dry ground in this flood of new information, new hope. They go fishing. And too, going fishing takes them back to the moment when Jesus first called them; perhaps holding the nets in their hands again, casting them out into the dark waters of the night will bring them closer again to their call. But things don't go as they had hoped, and they catch no fish. And a stranger on the shore offers a bit of direction, an encouragement to throw out their nets one more time. And the net comes up overflowing. And they

realize the stranger is Jesus. Peter dives into the water, impulsive again, and rushes to see Jesus who is making them breakfast at the fire on the shore, feeding them again.

After they eat, Jesus asked Peter a question three times:

"Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

The question repeated three times echoes just days before when Peter denied three times even knowing who Jesus was, denied he was a disciple, a friend of Jesus.

Jesus calls Peter, Simon, his name before Jesus had called him and changed his name to Peter, the rock on which the church would be built.

And Peter answers like a teenager, "you know I love you", evading the use of his previous name, ducking his so recent failings and denials.

In this conversation, Jesus is inviting, encouraging Peter more fully back into the community. Jesus, with asking Peter of his love for Jesus, is giving Peter three times to move beyond the shame and sadness of his denials, that would hold him back and burden him.

Jesus forgives Peter, and trusts him with mighty work, not joining an avenging Messiah in slaughtering enemies, but joining a suffering servant in the work ahead of all of us:

Feed my lambs

Tend my sheep

Feed my sheep

Peter was far from perfect, far from being highly qualified to do the work of ministry in the name of Jesus, but Peter was still so needed, and Jesus calls him again.

One writer succinctly brings this story from Peter to us:

"God's work still needs us, too, and being ourselves has not disqualified us from the mission."

Being ourselves does not disqualify us from following God's call, does not disqualify us from feeding and tending those in need. Bringing ourselves means offering our lives: flaws, gifts, mistakes, hopes, denials, joys, betrayals, and all.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God, and nothing can disqualify us

from being part of God's work in this also broken world.

Amen.