

John 21:1-19. New Revised Standard Version
Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

In our scripture today, Jesus comes once again unannounced. Peter and six other disciples have gone fishing at Peter's suggestion. They have been asked to wait for the Holy Spirit before they begin their ministry, but Peter is a man of action and waiting is not a passive activity for Him.

Once again Jesus arrives after the disciples have been fishing all night without catching fish. Jesus calls out to the men and asks if they have caught anything. They answer that they have not. At this point, it would be natural for someone wanting to buy fish to ask that question. But then Jesus tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat and when they do they find they have caught a bounty of fish.

Peter is a little slow on the uptake, but "the disciple that Jesus loved" recognized that it was Jesus and told Peter. Peter immediately puts on his garment and jumps in and swims to the shore. Just as the first disciples called at their boats left immediately and followed Jesus, Peter has no hesitation and leaves boat, fish, and companions to follow Jesus this day.

When all are ashore they find Jesus has a fire going with fish and bread. Jesus invites the disciples to bring some of their recent catch to cook on the fire. Just as Jesus asked what food was available at the feeding of the 5000, Jesus asks for a food offering from the disciples. Jesus could have fed the 5000 and the disciples without any food being donated or graciously offered, but He chooses to have His followers acknowledge what He can do with their scarcity and their bounty.

After the meal, Jesus addresses Peter directly. Previously He had renamed Simon (Peter), the rock upon which the church would be built. Jesus was referring to Peter's faith and his ability to see who Jesus was as the Christ, the Savior, God's Son. Peter's Spirit led wisdom was evident and Jesus would ask Peter to lead the disciples in growing that faith movement. But Jesus knew Peter himself needed to be shown again what kind of leadership that would take.

So Jesus asks Peter three times if he loved Him. And each time we see Jesus exclaim what the calling was Peter would accept. Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Feed my Sheep. Peter was to lead by example. Peter would Preach and teach and heal, all as servant and follower of the Christ. Peter would have to loose his life to find his life in Jesus. Peter was frustrated but totally committed to Jesus and would never again, with the help and strength of Holy Spirit, deny Jesus or his calling as a disciple and Apostle.

Peter's sword would stay in its sheath. Peter would preach peace in and through the risen Christ. He would lift up the poor and all would be invited to the table of bountiful food and grace. Peter would Join Paul in opening the doors of faith to the stranger, the foreigner, the sinner and the rebel. Peter knew the liberation of forgiveness, the joy of reconciliation, and the power of Easter resurrection. Love had cast out all fear and doubt for Peter as he began his journey as servant leader of a faith movement that would "go into all the world making disciples" in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Could we do any less having received the same grace and calling? Can we too say, "yes, Lord you know that we love you!" Then "feed my sheep".

Loving God, forgiving God, we offer you our whole selves just as Peter and the other disciples did. May we be bold in our testimonies of the love and grace available through your Son, Jesus. And May we too say yes to caring for our neighbors knowing you have placed us where we are for your purposes and your ministry. May we be known as peacemakers in our world today.

Amen

Mel Crowley