

John 21.1-21.19

Do Something

May 1, 2022

The disciples were in trouble after the death of Jesus
They were disoriented – frightened – confused
They attempted to reorient themselves by going home
They went up to the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee)
Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.”

Here they are in a time of uncertainty and disorientation – if this isn't familiar to you – you must have been asleep for the last three years

We took a trip out of town last weekend

I could not remember to put on a mask in the hotel

So many times I forgot to take it off when I was in my car

Even more disorienting in those seasons when we did not have the comfort of being in this place

I love to pray alone in sanctuaries

So, the disciples are back in Galilee

Wondering what had happened and what comes next

they went back home

But, for the disciples, going back to their old ways was totally unproductive

They went back to fishing, and they didn't catch anything

But this isn't a story about not being able to go back home again

We already know that Jesus comes and brings them back home again – Jesus comes and brings it all back home again

When Jesus comes...

Even their fishing improves – they can barely haul the nets into the boat they catch so many

That is when they proclaim, "It is the Lord."

Jesus clarifies

In the presence of Jesus their lives are reoriented

They can see clearly again

I still remember the feeling of getting separated from my parents in a crowd – do you? I also vividly remember those moments of separation with my own kids

The responsibility of caring for other people's kids traveling across the country! (Tennessee)

Most situations, it is not the child that is going to solve the dilemma – it is the adult

You remember that moment in the store when your parents find you?

And even if they scold you, you know, because you can see it all over their faces – they are so happy and so relieved

The disciples are separated from Jesus and, at least for a moment in time, lost – but now Jesus is present again and everything is turning around

This is what it means to live rooted in the wisdom and truth and the presence of the of God!

No matter how disoriented we get – no matter how we wander

The in-breaking of the presence of the Spirit of God gives us direction

Gives us meaning

Gives us purpose

Gives us hope

And that is God's doing, not ours

I can't tell you how many times, growing up in the church, I heard someone offer their witness and say that they found Jesus

You don't find Jesus, He's not the one who's lost, Jesus finds you and claims you as his own
And so...Jesus comes to Peter as the embodiment of the grace flowing from God to us
He gave Peter a successful fishing trip, and a chance to start over with him – that is a gift he didn't necessarily earn
Whether we deserve it or not, God's grace flows to us
Our salvation is based on God's love and compassion, not our worthiness
God loves us even when we are distant, lost, even when we are actively doing the distancing

Remember...Just after Jesus' arrest Peter takes the right direction – he is the only disciple to follow Jesus
Then...Peter took the wrong direction when he was discovered in the crowd - denial
Fear and anxiety took over and he deserted Jesus.
And then Jesus is gone – can you imagine the sorrow and loss he was feeling? (grandmother)

Jesus brings Peter back in, here on the beach
Jesus asks him three times – “do you love me.”
“Peter is being sifted to the core with these three questions.”
Wouldn't we all get progressively more nervous with each subsequent question?
I would – I would begin to think I was supposed to answer differently – different words, different emphasis
Did Peter? His last response sounds a little exasperated
“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."

This conversation contains echoes of the conversation Jesus had with all of his disciples just before he was arrested
Are they ready to follow him...all the way...?

We have made much of the three-fold invitation to Peter from Jesus

It does nicely reverse his three-fold denial

But I do not believe that Peter's love is ever in doubt

Most likely, he is rebuilding Peter's confidence in his love of Jesus after the overwhelming feeling of having let him down in the denials

Yet we focus so much attention on the "love" part of the question – and not so much on the culmination of the questions

This is an if, then conversation, we focus so much on the if, we forget the then

Jesus is actually building on the love he knows Peter has to lead him to where he will be for the rest of his life

He was directing Peter to a life of sacrificial service

But not just Peter, the other apostles as well and the other disciples – which comes all the way down to you and me

In all of Christian faith – love is action

Christian love is not just a warm, fuzzy feeling or a simple expression – a turn of a phrase - but an action

So, Jesus tells Peter, "If you love me, feed my sheep."

It is not an intellectual assent to some abstract notion about Jesus

It is not signing on to some school of theology

It is loving like Jesus loved

Loving the church – the people of God – being a loving neighbor

“If you love me, feed my sheep.”

In other words, “If you love me, DO SOMETHING.”

Feed my sheep...

In a Spiritual way – word or sacrament, worship and praise, instruction, wisdom, teaching

Feed my sheep...

In a practical way – give them something to eat and drink, clothing or shelter

Jesus is calling us to act on the faith and love we profess
You may not be able to recreate that first passion that ignited your faith

But you can certainly act on the principles of the life of faith
And in that action, you will meet your passion again

Do you love him? Then what will you do?

It doesn't need to be big (but it can be if that is what you are called to)

Have a spiritual conversation with a friend

Pray *with* someone not just *for* someone – when you go to pray with them, you can take them a meal or run an errand for them

Suitcases for foster kids (College Hill UMC)

This congregation is rich in opportunities for loving service

You may be awaiting an invitation

But you were already invited – that invitation is called baptism

Do you love him? Take some action – do it today, do it before this week is out, before you come back to worship again

“If you love me, feed my sheep”

Do you love him? (x3)
Feed his sheep

When we “get it” – grace, salvation and the kingdom of God – we are called to follow
We are called to live like Jesus and love like Jesus

You are the light of the world. Amen.