

DIVE IN (CHERISH THE GRACE)

John 21:1-19

Intro

I wasn't sure what we should hear from this week. I really wasn't sure. But that feeling of moving from inside to outside (the idea that we talked about last Sunday) kept tickling around through the grey matter.

So I went back to the Gospel of John to see what else was written. What we have there is what feels like a postscript to what very much feels like an ending to the gospel after chapter 20. It is there that we have Jesus appearing before several of the disciples again, this time back up in Galilee. It would be really easy to focus on the miracle that Jesus initiates (and we'll touch on that), but what really stood out to me was the conversation that takes place between Jesus and Peter in which Jesus asks him three times, 'do you love me?'

Now, as we have been talking about for the last few weeks, we are the disciples, and the disciples are us. So listen to these words, gather around the fire with Jesus and the meal that he has already prepared by the resurrected savior, and ask yourself the question, 'why does Jesus keep asking me the same question?' The scripture reads this way.

John 21:1-19

¹After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon 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.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' ⁶He 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. ⁷That 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 lake. ⁸But 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.

⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus 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. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When 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.' ¹⁶A 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.' ¹⁷He 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.'

¹⁸Very 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.' ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

"Dive In (Cherish the Grace)"

Jesus just keeps asking the same question...and Peter keeps giving him the same answer.

I let that thought rattle around inside the brain for a minute and an interesting memory came to mind: it was of my grandparents sitting side by side in their respective recliners. My grandmother would say something like, 'George, could you turn up the volume on the TV?' My grandfather, holding the remote, would respond, 'wha?' 'Turn up the TV.' 'What's that?' 'Turn the volume up! On the TV!' 'The TV is on!' At which point my grandmother sits back into her chair and shakes her head while my grandfather thinks that he has clearly answered the question that was asked...before realizing he can't really hear the TV and turns the volume up.

Well, this passage is not one of those, 'Jesus really needs to turn up his hearing aides' moments that are all though out the gospels, ...because there are none.

No, Jesus is speaking a very real issue that needs to be addressed. Any guesses on what that issue is?

Here's why. 'The woman said to Peter, 'You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?' He said, 'I am not.' Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing round it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself. Then they asked him, 'You are not also one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with him?' Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.'

Three times Peter denied Jesus. He flat out lied, just as Jesus told him he would and exactly as he said he would not. And just a few hours later, Jesus was dead.

How would you respond to that sort of a reality? Again, we are the disciples and the disciples are us. How would you feel?

All of us are able to arrive are variations of the theme of people who feel unworthy to be in Jesus presence, much less be worthy of carrying Jesus mantle of ministry forward.

But that was the reality that Peter experienced and our experience may be nothing like that. That's okay. Because Peter's experience is not intended to act as an exclusionary moment, but instead one that shows just how all-encompassing the presence of God can be in our lives...if we are willing to be open to how He shows up in our lives.

Peter and the disciples (at least the way that John lines up his story) have still not headed out into the world to proclaim the truth of a resurrected Jesus. They have moved out from behind the doors, but the first move of a majority of the disciples is to head back to what is familiar, to what they know, to their family, to their friends, to their homes. They head to Galilee and do what many of them were raised to do: they go fishing.

What takes place next (Jesus showing up, preparing a breakfast, and encouraging the disciples to try the other side of the boat), really doesn't surprise me.

But Peter's reaction, when he finally realizes who it is that is on the shore, that feels so utterly real and understandable, that does.

Yes, Peter knows that Jesus has been raised from the dead...and he's still carrying with him stuff that leaves him feeling 'less than'.

Have you ever felt less than...somebody else, then the task at hand, then how you hear others describe you? Have you ever felt less than?

That's Peter's reality...which he is trying desperately to ignore and/or forget. But it's still there. Even if it's in the background, it's still there affecting how he is able to move in the foreground of his life.

And Jesus pushes in. Jesus pushes in to show him that what he's got going on in the background should not become the silent driver of what is going on in the foreground of his life (remember, the disciples haven't stepped out into the world taking on the mantle of the call that they have had placed before them...not yet.)

Jesus pushed in to Peter's life: do you love, do you love me, do you love me.

Jesus pushes into our lives as well. Now, it might not feel like a breakfast on the shore after miraculously pulling up 153 fish – I guess somebody had to count them.

But maybe it does.

Maybe it's that still small voice that says you should help in this that or the other way and when you finally relent and follow, the ways that you feel you are in God's presence are too obvious to ignore.

Maybe in it's in a song, or show or movie and that thought that you haven't quite been able to put your finger on, all of a sudden has articulation.

Whatever it is, Jesus will keep pushing into your life, preparing for you to recognize who he is and come and be with him so that you can be assured that you are the child of God who is able to be the light of the world.

So how are you going to get ready?

Jesus will keep pushing in: allow yourself to be open to his presence and then dive in! And it doesn't matter if you don't feel that you are worthy of that love...because in Jesus death and resurrection (which we are able to remember in a very poignant way in the sacrament of communion), we have already been shown that we are. We just have to listen to the savior as he reminds us again, that we are.

Jesus will keep showing up...and that will be regardless of how we may feel about ourselves, or God. Look for him. Listen for him. Take that second glance. Be prepared and then dive in. You are everything that God needs you to be because Jesus is with you. Dive in.

After Sermon Prayer

Holy God, You are amazing. You just keep showing up in our lives showing that regardless of how we may view ourselves, that You are able to see us in a much clearer way. God, we thank You for this gift of grace and look to cherish it as we move beyond these doors into the world of which we are a part. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.