

050122 "Follow Me" John 21:15-19

Today's story took place after Jesus' death and resurrection. For the Disciples, to have Jesus – their teacher and Lord for three years - arrested and crucified was a devastating shock. In fact, shortly before his death, Jesus spoke about the death and resurrection but the disciples could not understand the meaning of those words. They were lost and helpless, completely without guidance overnight.

In this context, Simon Peter told them, "I'm going out to fish," and they said, "We'll go with you." It was not that they wanted to go fishing as a recreational or hobby, but they may have been thinking about whether they should go back to their lives as fishermen, that is, the life they had before they met the Lord. Remember how Simon Peter denied knowing Jesus three times despite his promise to stay with him forever. He is now going back to his past, to his fisherman self, before his encounter with Jesus.

So, the disciples went to Galilee and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. We know that many of them were fishermen. How do you think they must have felt? "Gosh, I failed as Jesus' disciple, now I can't even catch fish like I used to!" They probably despaired. Simon Peter may have even wondered if he was being punished for having betrayed Jesus. Haven't we also experienced the moments when we can't sleep at night because we have too many thoughts?

Until dawn, the disciples of Jesus could not get even a single fish, and their hearts

were still heavy and dark. Verse 4 says, "Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus." The disciples were so busy being their old selves and relying on their own strength to do something that they didn't have time to notice Jesus. It was Jesus who approached them first and said, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" "No." "Throw your net on 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.

Surprisingly, if you read the Bible verses that record the events of Jesus' resurrection, there are scenes where the disciples of Jesus do not recognize Jesus even when they see Him in front of them. However, analyzing the causes, when they were discouraged, when they were afraid, even if the Lord was standing in front of them, they did not recognize him. Perhaps, aren't we the same? The moment we are discouraged, the moment we are afraid, even though the Lord is still with us and working God's work in our lives, do we not see the Lord?

John the Apostle was the first to recognize Jesus. Simon Peter, always impatient, jumped from the boat into the sea when he heard that "It is the Lord." They were fishing all night sweating, so they didn't even wear coats. As soon as he heard the words, "It is the Lord," he put on his outer garments, that is, showed courtesy to the Lord, and ran to the Lord. He must have had a lot of thoughts racing through his head as he ran towards Jesus. "Should I say sorry? How will I explain myself?"

Even as we fail constantly, it is an absolute privilege to recognize and look towards

Jesus who makes up for our pain and mistakes. This is how restoration and healing begin. It is the beginning of healing. It is the beginning of flourishing. As we go through life, we come across very complicated and difficult things. Everyone... everyone is. Even those who believe in Jesus are the same. The moments when work is out of your hands and you have a lot of thoughts... You pour out your heart to God, and sometimes you complain. You go wandering too. But eventually, we go back to the Word of God, and we find the strength to carry on, or to be renewed, in Jesus and His word.

When the disciples lifted the net, there were 153 fish caught. But look at what the Bible tells us next: "Even with so many, the net was not torn." In other words, the net should have been torn apart with so many fish, but it did not. Jesus shared bread and fish with the disciples. The disciples knew it was Him, but didn't have the courage to face him – they remained silent (verse 12). The disciples were probably starving from fishing all night, but couldn't swallow properly because of their heavy hearts. Again, it was Jesus who broke the awkward silence.

He turned to Simon Peter, and addressed him as Simon, the name he went by before he met Jesus. "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than you love these people?" As he was, from the desire to return to the past, even if he was in a desperate state, Jesus asked, "Do you love me?" By giving him an opportunity to confess his love, Jesus raised Peter up again!

The first and foremost spiritual principle is the restoration of the relationship

between me and God. If our spiritual life is about being on par with other people, following what other Christians do, that is not a real believer's path. We need to give ourselves fully to the Lord, purely out of love for Him. The Lord did not bear the cross because of keeping his reputation. He loved us to the point of death, dying on the cross for our sins.

When we despair and feel depressed, Jesus asks us: "Do you love me?" Even though Simon Peter denied Jesus three times, his love for Jesus was real. So despite feeling super embarrassed about being asked three times, Simon Peter confessed honestly, "you know that I love you, Lord." Jesus accepted this confession as it was. He didn't even ask about what happened in the past. Instead, he said, feed my lambs; tend my sheep.

We experience failure and mistakes ourselves. But each time, Jesus asks us with his unchanging love, "do you love me?" This is a call for us to come back to the very foundation of a spiritual life. When we experience Jesus' love through this confession, we regain our love and passion for the Lord and find strength to stand again.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, I pray that you will know the Lord's heart through the passage today. The heart that commands us to feed His sheep... As He loved the disciples to the very end, Jesus loves the countless lost souls who wander because they don't know the love of God. Many of us often feel like we are not good enough to be a shepherd for His sheep. But Jesus still tells us to feed

them, with the love that He gives us. He commands us to tend to them, despite our weaknesses. He tells us to start over with love for Jesus. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I earnestly pray that all of us will be comforted by the love of Jesus again, our spirits and bodies will be revived through the love of the cross and the power of resurrection, so that we may see Jesus and hear the Lord's voice, "Follow me." Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.