



May 5, 2019 Jn. 21: 1-19 & Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41

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ENTERING THE SCENE:

Every ending is a new beginning that hasn't revealed itself as yet. This is the message of Easter. This is what the disciples of today's reading have yet to discover. Standing on the shore, Jesus could see what they could not see, and directed them where to lower their nets. God is viewing our lives from "another shore" and can tell us where to lower our nets, if we but are willing to listen. This is the process of becoming a disciple, that is, one who is a student of a teacher. God's process of calling each of us into our future seems to be the same for all ages. The details are different, the process is the same. Just when we revert to old ways in times when the future is not clear to us, we discover that there is no going back. This is the creative moment when God's voice comes to us from the edges of our consciousness to beckon us into our future. The task is to willingly take this call and follow wherever it may lead us. Our faith promises that it leads us to God.

[John 21:1-19](#)

21 After these things Jesus **showed himself again** to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² 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. ³ 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.** ⁴ **Just after daybreak,** Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples **did not know** that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "**Children,** you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.** ⁸ 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. ⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with **fish** on it, and **bread.** ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ 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.** ¹² 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. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the **third time that** Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was **raised from the dead.** ¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you **love (agape) me more than these?**" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I **love (philos)** you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my **lambs.**" ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you **love (Agape)** me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ 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 (philos)** you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my **sheep.**" ¹⁸ 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." ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would **glorify God.**) After this he said to him, "**Follow me.**"

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Peter and the other disciples could follow Jesus because they had affirmed their love for Jesus. How does your affirmation of love help you to do the same?

PRAYER: Tender of the lambs and sheep, you gave me the disciples to help me know and love you and therefore want to follow you as they did. When I am tempted to fall back on the familiar - when I don't know how to do that, please help me be aware that on my own I could do nothing. Now I trust in your promise to be with me forever as I like those disciples trusted. Amen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

SHOWED HIMSELF AGAIN: It is commonly thought that chapter 21 of John is a later addition to the book. The author connects this material by adding another post-Resurrection appearance. The different gospels have given us very diverse accounts of what happened after the Resurrection.

What does this do to my understanding of those times? Have I ever witnessed something and remembered something different from others who witnessed the same event? What additional information do I get by comparing the different accounts?

I'M GOING FISHING: In moments of indecision we often revert to what we know best. The disciples seem to be caught in such a moment.

Can I remember a time that I couldn't make up my mind about something, so I went back to doing the familiar? How was it? Does this help me to connect with this event?

CAUGHT NOTHING: The disciples now find that they can't even fish effectively anymore. It is as if there is no going back, even though the way ahead does not seem clear either.

Can I remember such a liminal time in my life, where I could not go back, but could not see clearly the way ahead? What feelings do I remember about that time?

JUST AFTER DAYBREAK: The best fishing time was during the night, so the early morning hours represent the threshold of failure for catching fish, but maybe the best time for catching humans.

Why does it seem that people have to concede failure on one level before they can move to another level of reality?

DID NOT KNOW: Almost without exception, the disciples fail to recognize the risen Jesus at first glance.

Why do I think this is?

CHILDREN: Earlier in Chapter 15:13-14 Jesus calls the disciples children. Some translations have him call them friends.

How does calling them children differ from calling them friends?

RIGHT SIDE: The right side (starboard) of a boat is the right-hand side of a vessel going forward.

What direction are the disciples headed now? Are they moving beyond their state of indecision now?

HAULED / TOWING / DRAGGED: All these words have the feeling of strenuous effort involved.

What is John implying by using these words? Can I get a sense of the disciples' situation by way of these words? If the words were lifted, reaped, or tossed, how would that have changed the meaning and feeling tone of this event?

DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED: Most scholars think this is John. Some feel that he wasn't named because he was still alive at the time of this composition, and therefore protected him from harm during the times of periodic persecution.

Can I think of any other reasons for not naming the one who Jesus loved?

JUMPED INTO THE SEA: In characteristic fervor, Peter jumps out of the boat after putting ON clothes.

What does this tell me about Peter? Why do I think he would put clothes on?

FISH / BREAD: In chapter 6 of John we have the account of feeding the 5000 with fish and bread.

What connection do I think the author of this gospel is making here?



NET WAS NOT TORN: Even though the nets were straining with the huge catch of every kind of fish known to live in the Sea of Galilee, it was not torn. By the time this gospel was written the early church had included a great many Gentiles in their faith communities.

How does this explanation help me to understand the mind of John and the early Christian communities regarding the inclusion of Gentiles?

THIRD TIME: The number three signifies a complete something. Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now he was being given the opportunity to affirm his love for Jesus three times.

What effect do I think this had on Peter?

RAISED FROM THE DEAD: This was the third time Jesus had appeared to the disciples after his Resurrection in John's gospel.

Jesus had raised people from the dead before, but they were restored to physical life and would have to eventually die again.

Do I think the disciples fully understood the difference between the resuscitation of other people (eg. Lazarus) and the Resurrection of Jesus? Do I understand the difference? How do I explain this difference?

TRULY LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE: Jesus asks Peter if he loves him more than all else?

Why is this is the first question Jesus asks? Does Jesus ask me this question first also?

DO YOU LOVE ME: Jesus then goes on to ask twice if Peter loves him?

How do I think Peter felt as the question is repeated that many times? Do I think his heart lightened each time? If not, why not?

LAMBS / SHEEP: Lambs are immature sheep.

What is Peter being asked to do when Jesus includes both lambs and sheep in his mandate?

FASTEN YOUR OWN BELT / TAKE: Peter is now able to do for himself, but later will be arrested and led to his death for his faith.

Do I think Peter had any appreciation of what his future as shepherd would entail? When he was sitting in prison awaiting his execution do I think he would find comfort remembering what Jesus said?

GLORIFY GOD: God's glory was revealed in the Resurrection, and would be further revealed when Peter followed Jesus to his own cross.

How is God's glory revealed in me as I face my own crosses? Have I ever thought about how my ability to love, in spite of suffering, reveals the glory (the nature) of God?

FOLLOW ME: To follow someone is to go where they are going, do what they are doing.

Where am I going this Easter season? What am I doing?

PARALLEL TEXTS: **Jn. 21:1** // Mt. 26:32; 28:7; **Jn. 21:3** // Mt. 4:18; Lk. 5:4-10; **Jn. 21:5** // Lk. 24:42; **Jn. 21:9** // Lk. 24:42f; **Jn. 21:13** // Lk. 24:42; **Jn. 21:15** // Lk. 5:10; Acts 20:28; **Jn. 21:17** // Jn. 13:37f; 18:17, 25f; Mt. 16:17f; Lk. 22:31f; **Jn. 21:18** // 2 Pt. 1:14; **Jn. 21:19** // Jn. 13:36;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 5: 27-32, 40-41; [Ps. 30:2-6, 11-13](#); Rev. 5:11-14; Jn. 21:1-19; Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 9: 1-20; [Ps. 30](#); Rev. 5:11-14; Jn. 21:1-19;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Today, however, we place the focus on Peter. The occasion is the morning after. A friend calls this the "first breakfast," evoking the fateful night of the 'last supper.' We see the fishermen at sea, as if they are uncertain what to do. And so they fall back on their habitual practices. But once they recognize Jesus, their excitement carries the morning.

But then comes the moment of reckoning. It seems evident that this three-fold question asked of Peter serves to revoke the denials made earlier. Some would question this, pointing out that the Gospel of John, in whose Gospel this episode appears, only mentions a two-fold denial. However, it seems pretty clear that the program is to erase the earlier denials. His response suggests nothing more than that of one who is troubled by that earlier failure, and finds it painful to make this new affirmation in the light of it.

Not that he is unwilling, but rather that it revives unpleasant memories. The three questions are the same, though the answers differ slightly. The response of forgiveness takes the form of "paying it on." If you love me, feed my sheep. Be a pastoral person. The words of the Lord's Prayer come to mind. My forgiveness involves forgiving others. It is because I have been forgiven, in fact, that makes my impulse to forgive possible and likely. Forgiveness is an appropriate theme for the Easter stories, since it also represents a lease on new life. The forgiven are the revived.
Fr. Robert Beck

It is very important to realize that our vocation is hidden in where we are and who we are. We are unique human beings, each with a call to realize in life what nobody else can, and to realize it in the concrete context of the here and now. Henri Nouwen

"The will of God is not a 'fate' to which we must submit, but a creative act in our life that produces something absolutely new, something hitherto unforeseen by the laws and established patterns. Our cooperation consists not solely in conforming to external laws, but in opening our wills to this mutually creative act." Thomas Merton

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach.
Clarissa Pinkola Estes

The person has particular gifts, life experiences, and understandings of those experiences that suit him for the mission. This is what we mean when we say that we are called by name. We are not called by category: ethnic, diagnostic, or any other. Surrendering ones natural capacities to this service of God is how we find ultimate fulfillment in this life.... We know we are living our mission when our personal truth becomes identical with God's truth. [Fr. Jonah Wharff 7/12/15](#)

We seldom realize fully that we are sent to fulfill God-given tasks. We act as if we were simply dropped down in creation and have to decide to entertain ourselves until we die. But we were sent into the world by God, just as Jesus was. Once we start living our lives with that conviction, we will soon know what we were sent to do. Henri J. M. Nouwen

This is what vocation, marital or monastic, calls us to: to live for a cause, a love, for which we would sustain any hardship. 5/17/15
[Fr. Jonah Wharaff](#)

However, wherever, and whenever Peter experienced his encounter with the risen Jesus, he eventually settled in Jerusalem, where according to the book of Acts he and the apostle John directed the inchoate church. Peter and the few dozen men and women with him lived as Jesus had taught them, as if the messianic age were already breaking in. Eschewing the desires of private property and self-preservation, they established a utopian community in which they were all one family of mothers and brothers and sisters. Pg. 63. Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Misunderstood Jew*. NY. Harper Collins. 2006

Every person has to come to the God experience on their own. Conversion is a foundational change in life position, perspective, and finally, one's very identity. After the transformation God is not out there anymore. You don't look at God as a separate identity; you look out from God who lives in you and through you and with you. That is a major shift, probably the most major shift possible for humans. Richard Rohr.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he convinced them that he was not a ghost but the same one that they had known as their teacher and friend. To his frightened and doubtful friends he said, "See by my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see for yourselves" (Luke 24:39). Then he asked them for something to eat, and later, when he appeared to them for the third time, he offered them breakfast, bread and fish (see Luke 24:42—43 and John 21:12—14). But Jesus also showed them that his body was a new spiritual body, no longer subject to the laws of nature. While the doors of the room where the disciples had gathered were closed, Jesus came and stood among them (see John 20:19), and when he offered them breakfast, nobody dared to ask, "Who are you?" They knew it was Jesus, their Lord and teacher, but they also knew that he no longer belonged to their world (see John 21:12). It was this experience of the risen Jesus that revealed to his disciples the life in the resurrection that was awaiting them. Are there any experiences in our lives that give us a hint of the new life that has been promised us? Nouwen, Henri. *Bread For the Journey*. NY. HarperSanFrancisco. 1977. December 1 reading.

Conversion isn't a one-time event. It isn't a moment. It is thousands of moments. It is a lifetime of moments. And it never ends. Deacon Greg Kandra

The only appropriate response to this promising God is hope, which abandons the human heart to trust in the giver of such overwhelming, freely given bounty: "Hope is a radical, unquestioning openness to the breaking in of God Future." Pg. 148. MacIntyre, Margaret. *The Cosmic Pilgrim*. Eugene, OR. WIPf & Stock Pub. 2010

In the mid third century, Cyprian, faced with persecutions and divisions erupting in the early church, looks to John 21: 17 to build his case for unity in diversity within the church. "The authority of the bishops forms a unity, of which each holds his part in its totality." This will later on be spelled out in the Council of Constance (1414-1418).

Ehrman, Bart. *After the New Testament*. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pages 340ff.

The seven men dining on fish in the fresco from a burial chamber in the Catacomb of Callistus in Rome are a possible representation of this post



Easter event mentioned in John's gospel. The fourth-century church father Augustine made an important Christological point of this story: The fish roasted is a figure of Christ's suffering; and he himself is also the bread that comes down from heaven. There is no obvious Jesus figure in the catacomb painting, perhaps because in Roman custom funeral meals were celebrated by the friends of the deceased; the deceased was thought to be present at these meals but invisible.

Jensen, Robin A. *Dining in Heaven: The Earliest Christian Visions of Paradise*. Bible Review. October 1998. Pages 32ff.

In the ancient and contemporary Middle East leaders gather followers and form factions for the purpose of gaining some advantage over others. Those who follow a leader know and understand full well what the leader is after. They join the leader because they

believe that in unity there is strength that this group together can achieve more and achieve it more effectively than any individual might do alone. Each group member is strongly bonded with the leader. In contrast, group members have weak bonds to each other.... Insights from Mediterranean culture highlight how untidy and confusing the early circle of believers really was. Competition was rife; this was culturally normal. But no matter how intently others jockeyed for position, or how well the Beloved Disciple played the role of noble shepherd, it is Jesus the leader who makes the final decision: Peter is appointed noble shepherd.

Pilch, John J. The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle C. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1997. Pages 73 and 75.

Jn. 21:1–25: Epilogue. On the basis of its content and literary style, this chapter has sometimes been viewed as an addition, written by someone other than the author of chs 1–20. Unlike 7.53–8.11, however, the manuscript evidence does not show that it circulated separately from the rest of the Gospel or that the Gospel originally ended with ch 20. 2: Not a full listing of Jesus' disciples; the sons of Zebedee are mentioned here for the first time (cf. Mk 1.19–20). 3: Fishing, recalling the prior occupation of the disciples but also symbolizing their new role of gathering disciples. 7: It is odd that Peter dresses but then jumps into the sea. 9: The passage recalls the multiplication of loaves and fishes in ch 6. 11: Numerous theories have been proposed to account for the number 153, e.g., Jerome states that Greek zoologists had recorded 153 different types of fish, in which case the number symbolizes the universality of the Gospel's message and mission; Augustine notes that 153 is the sum of all numbers from 1–17. 15–17: The referent of these is not certain. Jesus commissions Peter as the leader of his lambs (cf. 10.1–5). The triple question undoes the triple denial (18.17,25–27). These verses include extraordinary variation in Greek terminology that is not generally evidence in English translation, including two verbs for "to love," "to know," and "to feed or tend." It is not clear that this variation has significance in terms of meaning. 18: This verse contrasts the agility of the young with the infirmity of the old, who cannot even fasten their own belts. 19: This comparison refers to Peter's martyrdom, which will glorify God, to which he will be led by others. This may be a reference to the death of Peter. Pgs. 195–6. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. ¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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." ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."



Long before the cross became the most prevalent symbol of Christianity, early worshipers used a fish. Evidence from written sources comes as early [Clement of Alexandria](#) (150-211), who told the readers of his [Paedagogus](#) to have either a fish or a dove engraved on their seals. Visual presentations of fish as a Christian symbol appear in early burial chambers such as the catacombs of [St. Callistus](#) (founded in the middle of the second century as in this photo).

Tzaferis, Vassilios. [To God Jesus Christ](#). Biblical Archaeological Review. 3-4/07. Pgs. 33ff.

"Consult not your fears, but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do." (Pope John XXIII).

Love means both servanthood and surrender, the head apostle is told. In the second half of life, Peter must allow himself to be led "where he could rather not go." Pg. 195. Rohr, Richard. *Immortal Diamond*. San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Pub. 201

Love doesn't just sit there, like a stone, it has to be made, like bread; remade all the time, made new. - Ursula K. Le Guin

In the original language the word for love has several meanings. Philos is the love of a friend. Agape is the love of the beloved. Peter responds honestly with philos and after Pentecost can truly say agape.

Philos: before vowels phil-, word-forming element meaning "loving, fond of, tending to," from Greek **philo-**, comb. form of **philos** "dear" (adj.), "friend" (n.), from philein "to love," of unknown origin.

Agape (Ancient Greek ἀγάπη, agapē) is a Greco-Christian term referring to love, "the highest form of love, charity" and "the love of God for man and of man for God".

Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams. Love in dreams is greedy for immediate action, rapidly performed and in the sight of all. Men will give their lives if only the ordeal does not last long but is soon over, with all looking on and applauding as though on the stage. But active love is labor and fortitude, and for some people too, perhaps, a complete science.
Fyodor Dostoevsky

The Christian definition of love is "pursuit of the good of the other for the other's own sake." As the greatest commandment we are told that, in this pursuit of the others good, our own good is assured. This is the great principle of "for": in pursuing the good of the other, one's own good is assured. Fr. Jonah Wharff

Love is saying yes to belonging. That's my definition of love, pure and simple. Anything that we call love, as far as I can see, is in some way related to this yes. . . And that saying yes is not just an intellectual assent; it has profound moral implications. It means . . . acting the way people act when they belong together. - David Stendl-Rast

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle C 2013. Pgs. 83-86.

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2007. Pgs 89-92.

Solitude Sends Us Reeling: <http://ronrolheiser.com/solitude-sends-us-reeling/#.Vtnf6ZwrKhd>