

SLIDE 1 – Fishing at the dark of the day

Have you ever been wowed by an experience on an evening or weekend, but then you have to return to school or work and you are not sure how that experience meshes with what you do in your day to day existence? Have you ever attended the most enlightening class only to fail to apply it? They used to tell us when I attended a seminar or workshop that if we didn't apply what we learned in 48 to 72 hours, the chances of making use of the incredible revelation or wisdom would be lost.

It seems the disciples had troubles figuring out how to live in light of the resurrection.

In the gospel of John's telling of the story of Jesus, two weeks have now passed since the Day of Resurrection. The resurrected Christ has revealed himself to Mary Magdalene outside of the tomb. Mary was the first to tell the news of the resurrection to Peter and the others. Their initial response was fear.

On the evening of the Day of Resurrection Jesus went to the house where the disciples were locked up in fear. He went in and stood among them, revealing that indeed he had risen from the dead. But Thomas, one of the disciples was not in the house when Jesus appeared and he doubted. One week later the disciples were still gathered together at the house with the doors shut. This time Thomas was present. Jesus again came and stood among them and shared with them the peace.

In these three resurrection appearances those who encountered the risen Jesus trusted and believed in him for a short time. Then something stops them. There is a tentative nature about their belief. What do they do now? How should they live now? They have not begun to live out lives of faith. (Courage needed?)

Did you know that Jesus had been worried that something like this might happen? Jesus voiced concern for the future of his community once they would live their daily lives beyond his earthly physical presence. Jesus prayed to God about this concern, "I spelled out your character in detail to the men and women you gave me, (God). They were yours in the first place...they have done what you said...For

the message you gave me, I gave them, and they took it, and were convinced that I came from you...Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life that you conferred as a gift through me, so they can be one heart and mind, as we are one heart and mind.”

The scriptures tell us the door to the house they gathered in remained shut to the rest of the world. What will they do? They can't stay inside forever. In our story Peter gets them to do something, to return to fishing, for at least four of the disciples fished for a living. It was their job and daily work before becoming students of Jesus.

The disciples caught nothing all through the night. Then a new day was beginning. Just after daybreak Jesus stood on the beach, calling out to them. “Hey guys, you haven't caught any fish, have you?” Jesus appeared to them on an ordinary day but the disciples did not recognize him. He knows they have caught nothing, and when the disciples confirm this, he urges them to “cast the net on the right side of the boat.” When the disciples' nets cannot contain the abundant haul of fish, it is then that the Beloved Disciple sees the risen Jesus in the wonder of what has taken place. “It is the Lord!” he cries out!

In the midst of the ordinary days of life suddenly the Beloved Disciple sees that Jesus provides abundance, in this story, large fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them. At the wedding in Cana when the wine had run out, Jesus provided 180 gallons of the best of wines. On a mountainside where thousands had gathered to listen to him but the place was a food desert, Jesus took five loaves and two fish and fed them all and then some.

SLIDE 2 - Faith

Jesus is once again revealed to the disciples and Peter. The risen Lord is with them! The risen Lord has come back for them! Peter jumps in the water and hurries to Jesus. In faith Peter moves toward Jesus and the abundance he provides. When Jesus came for them Peter put on “some clothes” and jumped into the sea eager to get to Jesus. In faith Peter goes toward the One who offers extravagant forgiveness for our abundant sins. (in faith, we will find ourselves drawn to Jesus.)

We might wonder how it is that the risen Jesus was not immediately recognized. Author Reynolds Price imagined what the risen Christ might have looked like stepping out of the tomb. In Price's *The Foreseeable Future*, a short story set at the end of World War II, the main character Whit Wade, sits in a sanctuary staring at a stained glass window depicting the risen Christ coming out of the tomb. The picture showed "Christ (rising), palms outward, displaying their ruin. His side was bleeding and his lips were very nearly smiling. It came as a shock to Whit—that threat of a smile, the first he'd seen in a hundred pictures of this ferocious moment. The man looked glad. Glad? What working man ever laid down to sleep and wanted to rise?"

But rise from the dead Jesus did. Why did he rise? Why did he come back? Jesus rose and came back for Peter, for us.

SLIDE 3 – Rule of Three

Jesus came back for the disciples and for Peter. Peter, the disciple who when pressed on the night Jesus was betrayed, denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus came back not to condemn but to save. Jesus wants us not to deny him, but to love him, to believe in him, to trust in him, and until that happens we remain in the dark. Jesus came back to address Peter's darkness, his shame directly, and persistently, with words that cut through like the light.

Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" "Do you love me more than these?" Those of us who know the story know that Peter could get ahead of himself from time to time. Just before Jesus was arrested Peter had declared he would lay down his life for Jesus. He had trusted in his own strength and resolve. He had put himself above the other disciples. He had thought he could be a hero. But he ended up denying Jesus three times.

The rule of three, a literary device, is that anything repeated three times is more concrete, more persuasive. Peter concretely denied knowing Jesus, an act for which he was deeply sorry. Jesus knows he will need an abundance of grace to be able to follow him. It is as if Jesus is asking Peter, and us, will you trust in me for who I am, the one who offers abundant life, the one who takes away your sin, your judgement, your darkness, your denial, your death.

On the third day God raised Jesus from the dead. Why did he rise? Why did Jesus come back? He came back for us. He came back for Peter. He came back for all those who in a moment or for a time deny him, and in scripture we see he came back even for those who crucified him. He came back so that the disciples would know that they can trust in his mercy, and live with him and for him, in every ordinary day. He came back so that we might know that we, too, have life in him and with him as we seek to follow him.

SLIDE 4 – Prayer for Courage

Peter endured the three questions of Jesus, and each time confessed his love and commitment to Jesus. With each question and answer Peter was more certain of his calling and his future, it would be held secure within the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every act of confession and forgiveness when we come to worship is a return to the baptismal font where we die and rise with Christ. It is in baptism where God claims us, calls us, and gives us the Spirit, that we might come to know and love God.

We don't always know what is next in the ordinary days of our lives, but we can trust that God is with us, God's spirit is leading us, and Jesus' love supporting us.