

JOHN 21:1-19

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. ⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.^[c] ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. ¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

THERE ONCE WAS AN OLD WOODEN BUCKET THAT HAD BECOME TOO FLAWED TO HOLD WATER. YOU SEE THE WOOD DRIED OUT SO MUCH THAT THE SEAMS WERE NO LONGER STRONG, AND AS THE WOODEN SLATS SEPARATED THE BUCKET COULD NOT DO ITS JOB.

THE HOME OWNER TOLD HIS FRIEND THAT THE BUCKET, WHICH WAS MEANT TO HAUL WATER FROM A WELL, WAS GOING TO BE DISCARDED. BUT THE NEIGHBOR WHO HAD THE WISDOM OF MANY MORE YEARS OF LIFE-LOWERED THE BUCKET INTO THE WELL AND TOLD HIS FRIEND TO LEAVE IT THERE UNTIL HE RETURNED.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER THE OLD MAN CAME BACK AND DREW A BUCKET FILLED WITH WATER THAT STAYED INSIDE. HE EXPLAINED THE WOOD SIMPLY NEEDED TO BE REHYDRATED SO IT COULD DO ITS JOB PROPERLY.

THIS STORY SERVES AS BACKDROP FOR THE GOSPEL LESSON FOUND IN JOHN CHAPTER 21, WHICH TELLS ABOUT ONE WAY THE RISEN CHRIST RENEWED HIS DISCIPLES.

IF YOU HAVE EVER BEEN IN A PERIOD OF WAITING TO BEGIN A PROJECT OR A NEW JOB OR SOME OTHER NEW THING YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO EXPERIENCE AN “IN-BETWEEN” TIME OF LIFE.

THIS WAS NOT UNLIKE WHAT CHRIST'S DISCIPLES, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, OTHER FOLLOWERS WENT THROUGH AFTER HIS RESURRECTION UNTIL PENTECOST.

YES, JESUS WAS ALIVE ONCE MORE, BUT NO, HE DID NOT PICK UP WHERE HE LEFT OFF PRIOR TO HIS ARREST AND EXECUTION.

WHILE HE TOLD THE APOSTLES ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR THEM, JESUS GAVE NO DETAILS, NOR DID HE GIVE THEM THE GO AHEAD TO BEGIN.

CONSEQUENTLY, THEY WERE IN A TIME OF WAITING IN GALILEE UNTIL THEY WERE SUPPOSE TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM FOR THE JEWISH FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST.

THE OTHER PROBLEM WAS, WHILE JESUS WAS ALIVE ONCE MORE, HE DID NOT STAY WITH THE DISCIPLES ALL OF THE TIME BUT CAME AND WENT AS HE SAW FIT.

SO, ONE DAY PETER WAS WITH SEVERAL OF THE OTHER DISCIPLES WAITING FOR JESUS TO TURN UP AGAIN, AND HE DECIDED TO GO FISHING.

THIS WAS A RETURN TO A FAMILIAR OCCUPATION, AS WELL AS A WAY TO KEEP ACTIVE UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO BEGIN THE NEW THING JESUS PROMISED WAS ON THE WAY.

THE OTHER MEN WITH PETER JOINED HIM, AND THEY FISHED ALL NIGHT WITHOUT CATCHING ANYTHING. BUT THEN THEY HEARD A VOICE FROM THE NEARBY SHORE ASK ABOUT THEIR CATCH. AFTER CONFESSING THEIR FAILURE, THEY ARE TOLD BY THE MAN ON THE BEACH TO CAST THEIR NETS IN A CERTAIN PLACE.

THEIR OBEDIENCE PRODUCES A NET OF FISH FILLED TO OVERFLOWING, THEN SOMETHING CLICKS WITHIN THEM, AND THEY REALIZE IT IS JESUS ON THE SHORE.

HERE WE HAVE WHAT IS OFTEN CALLED A MIRACLE, BUT IT JUST AS LIKELY THAT JESUS SIMPLY KNEW WHERE THE FISH WERE LOCATED, OR HE SAW THEM FROM WHERE HE STOOD.

ACTUALLY, HOW THE CATCH OF FISH WAS MADE POSSIBLE IS FAR LESS IMPORTANT THAN WHAT IT MEANT FOR JESUS' DISCIPLES.

THE AMAZING CATCH OF FISH AFTER A FRUITLESS NIGHT ON THE WATER SERVED TO REMIND THEM HOW MANY OF THEM FIRST BECAME JESUS' DISCIPLES.

IN CHAPTER FIVE OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE, THERE WAS A SIMILAR INCIDENT THAT ENDED WITH JESUS ISSUING A CALL FOR PETER AND SOME OF THE OTHERS TO FOLLOW HIM. AT THAT TIME THEY WERE TOLD JESUS WOULD TEACH THEM TO FISH FOR PEOPLE.

THUS, THE RISEN LORD RETURNED THOSE SEVEN DISCIPLES BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THEIR JOURNEY WITH HIM, WHICH SERVED AS A KIND OF RENEWAL OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.

NEXT, JESUS INVITES THEM TO SHARE A MEAL OF FISH AND BREAD AROUND THE CHARCOAL FIRE ON THE BEACH. SURELY, THIS ALSO WAS FAMILIAR, SINCE OVER THE THREE YEARS THEY FOLLOWED JESUS THE TWELVE MUST HAVE SHARED COUNTLESS SIMILAR MEALS ALONE WITH HIM.

JESUS AND THE SEVEN DISCIPLES ATE AND TALKED, MUCH LIKE OLD TIMES. WE MIGHT EXPECT THAT THE MEAL AND THE CONVERSATION HELPED TO HEAL ANY LINGERING GUILT THE DISCIPLES HAD OVER ABANDONING THEIR MASTER WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED, SINCE IT SHOWED JESUS WELCOMED THEIR FELLOWSHIP.

AND YET, SURELY THERE WAS WITHIN SIMON PETER A GUILT THAT RAN A LITTLE DEEPER THAN WITHIN THE OTHERS. THE UNASKED QUESTION THAT PETER, AND PERHAPS THE OTHERS HELD WITHIN, CONCERNED HIS DENIAL OF JESUS.

REMEMBER, ON THE NIGHT OF HIS BETRAYAL PETER MADE AN OATH THAT NO MATTER WHAT OTHERS DID, HE WOULD STICK BY JESUS. SIMON PETER REFUSED TO BELIEVE JESUS WHEN HE TOLD HIM THIS WOULD NOT HAPPEN.

BUT THEN JESUS WAS ARRESTED. PETER AND ANOTHER DISCIPLE FOLLOWED AT A DISTANCE TO THE COURTYARD OF THE HOME OF THE HIGH PRIEST WHERE JESUS WAS TAKEN. THE NIGHT AIR WAS COOL ENOUGH THAT CHARCOAL FIRES BURNED OUTSIDE, AND PETER WENT NEAR ONE TO WARM HIMSELF.

IT WAS THERE HE WAS RECOGNIZED AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS, AND PETER STRONGLY DENIED IT, THREE DIFFERENT TIMES.

SO THERE PETER SAT WITH JESUS AND SOME OF THE OTHERS AROUND A DIFFERENT CHARCOAL FIRE-WITH THE GUILT OF HIS DENIAL BURNING WITHIN HIM.

JESUS, KNOWS THAT PETER NEEDS FURTHER HEALING OF THAT GUILT IF HE IS TO BE ABLE TO SERVE IN THE LEADERSHIP ROLE JESUS HAD PLANNED FOR HIM.

THE SAVIOR REACHES OUT TO REMOVE THE STAIN OF PETER'S GUILT IN THE WAY HE KNOWS IS BEST. JESUS ADDRESSES HIM FORMALLY, "SIMON SON OF JOHN, DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE?"

PEOPLE HAVE LONG WONDERED EXACTLY WHAT JESUS MEANT BY THAT QUESTION: WAS HE ASKING IF PETER'S LOVE FOR JESUS WAS STRONGER THAN THE LOVE THE OTHERS HAD?

OR DID JESUS WONDER IF PETER LOVED HIM MORE THAN HE LOVED HIS FELLOW DISCIPLES?

IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THE QUESTION JESUS ASKED WAS: DID PETER LOVE BEING A FISHERMAN MORE THAN FOLLOWING JESUS? THERE IS NO WAY OF KNOWING.

BUT WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT IS THAT JESUS ASKED PETER THREE TIMES TO AFFIRM HIS LOVE, GIVING HIM THE CHANCE TO CANCEL OUT EACH OF HIS DENIALS.

JUST AS IMPORTANTLY AFTER EACH EXPRESSION OF LOVE JESUS COMMANDED PETER TO DO SOMETHING TO DEMONSTRATE THE LOVE HE CONFESSED.

PETER WAS TOLD TO FEED HIS LAMBS, TEND HIS SHEEP, AND FEED HIS SHEEP. IN THIS WAY HE CALLED PETER THE FISHERMAN TO BECOME PETER THE SHEPHERD.

YOU SEE, WHEN IT COMES TO FISHING FOR PEOPLE. CATCHING THEM, BY INVITING THEM TO BELIEVE IN JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR IS ONLY PART OF THE TASK.

FISHING IS A SHORT-TERM COMMITMENT; SHEPHERDING REQUIRES A LONGER ONE.

HERE JESUS WAS ASKING PETER IF HE WAS WILLING TO COMMIT TO CARE FOR BOTH NEW CHRISTIANS AND HIS FELLOW APOSTLES.

PETER, AND THE OTHERS AS WELL, WOULD SOON BE SENT TO BOTH FISH FOR AND SHEPHERD, MEANING CATCH AND CARE FOR, FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

AND NOTICE THIS CALL WAS ISSUED BY JESUS AFTER THE DISCIPLES WERE FED PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BY THE RISEN LORD.

THE SAVIOR SHOWED HIS LOVE FOR THEM BY MAKING THEM COMFORTABLE WITH HIM ONCE MORE.

WE KNOW FROM THE GOSPELS JESUS HAD NO PROBLEM CONFRONTING PEOPLE'S SIN DIRECTLY, BUT NOTICE WITH HIS DISCIPLES, AND ESPECIALLY WITH PETER HE DID NOT.

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE JESUS NEVER SPOKE A WORD TO THEM ABOUT HOW THEY ABANDONED HIM, DENIED HIM. OR OTHERWISE LET HIM DOWN WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED/

INSTEAD, HE HELPED THEM DEAL WITH THEIR PAST BY SHOWING HIS LOVE FOR THEM IN THE PRESENT.

THIS OFFERS CHRISTIANS SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES, WE HAVE WITH UNRESOLVED ISSUES IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

OF COURSE, WE DO NOT HAVE THE INSIGHT JESUS HAD INTO OTHER PEOPLE, BY ALWAYS KNOWING WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH THE PAST.

BUT STILL, WE CAN THINK AND PRAY ABOUT OLD HURTS IN A RELATIONSHIP.

WHEN WE DO, WE MAY REALIZE THAT WHILE SOMETIMES CONFRONTING SOMEONE HEAD ON IS APPROPRIATE, OTHER TIMES IT MIGHT NOT BE.

THE IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION DO NOT REQUIRE A ONE-SIZE FITS ALL APPROACH.

ESPECIALLY WHEN WE KNOW SOMEONE VERY WELL WHO HAS LET US DOWN, LIKE THE DISCIPLES LET JESUS DOWN, WE OFTEN KNOW THE BEST APPROACH TO TAKE WHEN WE WANT TO LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND AND MOVE ON.

THIS IS ONE THING WE CAN TAKE FROM THE GOSPEL STORY THAT CAN BE APPLIED TO OUR OWN LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS.

ANOTHER LESSON IS THAT- IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WE OFTEN NEED TO MAKE PEACE WITH OUR PAST IN ORDER FOR US TO MOVE FORWARD IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE.

REMEMBER, WHILE JESUS DID NOT CONFRONT HIS DISCIPLES DIRECTLY CONCERNING THEIR FAILURE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL, HE DID DEAL WITH THEIR GUILT SO THEY COULD ALL MOVE ON TOGETHER.

THINK BACK TO THE STORY OF THE BUCKET. THE DISCIPLES HAD ALL FAILED JESUS MISERABLY, BUT HE DID NOT THROW THEM AWAY.

INSTEAD, HE TOOK TIME TO SHOW THEM HE STILL VALUED THEM AND ENCOURAGED THEM SO THEY WOULD BE BETTER PREPARED TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST.

AND ONE CHALLENGE THIS PASSAGE OFFERS CHRISTIANS IS TO CONSIDER HOW WE CAN FISH FOR AND SHEPHERD PEOPLE.

NOW, YOU MAY BE THINKING GOD HAS NOT CALLED YOU OR GIVEN YOU THE GIFTS TO BE AN EVANGELIST OR SHEPHERD, AND THAT MAY BE TRUE.

I AM NOT SPEAKING ABOUT GATHERING IN NETS OF FISH OR LEADING FLOCKS OF SHEEP.

INSTEAD, LET US REMINDER EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN SHARE HIS OR HER FAITH EXPERIENCES, AND SHOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN OUR ACTIONS.

AND WE ALL CAN AND SHOULD BE WILLING TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN BIG AND SMALL WAYS.

WHILE WE MAY ONLY BE CALLED TO SHEPHERD, THAT IS: ENCOURAGE, GUIDE, TEACH, TEND TO THE NEEDS OF- JUST A FEW PEOPLE, THIS IS STILL SHEPHERDING.

FURTHERMORE, WE DO THIS OFTEN WITHOUT THINKING FOR: FAMILY, FRIENDS, CO-WORKERS, NEIGHBORS, CHURCH FAMILY, AND EVEN STRANGERS.

CONSEQUENTLY, SHARING OUR FAITH-FISHING, AND CARING FOR-SHEPHERDING ARE PART OF THE CALLING FOR ALL OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

THIS BRING US TO A SECOND CHALLENGE WHICH IS FOUND IN THE STORY OF THE WOODEN BUCKET.

WE ALL GET LIKE THAT BUCKET FROM TIME TO TIME AND NEED TO BE RENEWED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

INDEED, WE NEED TO BE REMINDED AND TO REMIND OTHERS THAT JESUS NEVER GIVES UP ON US. INSTEAD, HE IS READY TO FORGIVE AND RENEW US WHEN WE TURN TO HIM.

THEREFORE, LET US NEVER FORGET THE POTENTIAL WITHIN US AND WITHIN OTHER PEOPLE.

AND AT THE VERY LEAST MAY WE NEVER GIVE UP PRAYING FOR THEIR, OR OUR OWN, RENEWAL IN CHRIST. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: JOHN 21:1-19

IF YOU HAVE EVER BEEN IN A PERIOD OF WAITING TO BEGIN A PROJECT OR A NEW JOB OR SOME OTHER NEW THING YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO EXPERIENCE AN “IN-BETWEEN” TIME OF LIFE. YES, JESUS WAS ALIVE ONCE MORE, BUT NO, HE DID NOT PICK UP WHERE HE LEFT OFF PRIOR TO HIS ARREST AND EXECUTION.

WHILE HE TOLD THE APOSTLES ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR THEM, JESUS GAVE NO DETAILS, NOR DID HE GIVE THEM THE GO AHEAD TO BEGIN. SO, ONE DAY PETER WAS WITH SEVERAL OF THE OTHER DISCIPLES WAITING FOR JESUS TO TURN UP AGAIN, AND HE DECIDED TO GO FISHING.

THIS WAS A RETURN TO A FAMILIAR OCCUPATION, AS WELL AS A WAY TO KEEP ACTIVE UNTIL IT WAS TIME TO BEGIN THE NEW THING JESUS PROMISED WAS ON THE WAY.

THE OTHER MEN WITH PETER JOINED HIM, AND THEY FISHED ALL NIGHT WITHOUT CATCHING ANYTHING. BUT THEN THEY HEARD A VOICE FROM THE NEARBY SHORE ASK ABOUT THEIR CATCH. AFTER CONFESSING THEIR FAILURE, THEY ARE TOLD BY THE MAN ON THE BEACH TO CAST THEIR NETS IN A CERTAIN PLACE. THEIR OBEDIENCE PRODUCES A NET OF FISH FILLED TO OVERFLOWING, THEN SOMETHING CLICKS WITHIN THEM, AND THEY REALIZE IT IS JESUS ON THE SHORE.

THUS, THE RISEN LORD RETURNED THOSE SEVEN DISCIPLES BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THEIR JOURNEY WITH JESUS, WHICH SERVED AS A KIND OF RENEWAL OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. NEXT, JESUS INVITES THEM TO SHARE A MEAL OF FISH AND BREAD AROUND THE CHARCOAL FIRE ON THE BEACH. SURELY, THIS ALSO WAS FAMILIAR, SINCE OVER THE THREE YEARS THEY FOLLOWED JESUS THE TWELVE MUST HAVE SHARED COUNTLESS SIMILAR MEALS ALONE WITH HIM.

WE MIGHT EXPECT THAT THE MEAL AND THE CONVERSATION HELPED TO HEAL ANY LINGERING GUILT THE DISCIPLES HAD OVER ABANDONING THEIR MASTER WHEN HE WAS ARRESTED, SINCE IT SHOWED JESUS WELCOMED THEIR FELLOWSHIP. AND YET, SURELY THERE WAS WITHIN SIMON PETER A GUILT THAT RAN A LITTLE DEEPER THAN WITHIN THE OTHERS.

THE UNASKED QUESTION THAT PETER AND PERHAPS THE OTHERS HELD WITHIN CONCERNED HIS DENIAL OF JESUS. WHEN JESUS WAS ARRESTED. PETER AND ANOTHER DISCIPLE FOLLOWED AT A DISTANCE TO THE COURTYARD OF THE HOME OF THE HIGH PRIEST WHERE JESUS WAS TAKEN. THE NIGHT AIR WAS COOL ENOUGH THAT CHARCOAL FIRES BURNED OUTSIDE, AND PETER WENT NEAR ONE TO WARM HIMSELF. IT WAS THERE HE WAS RECOGNIZED AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS, AND PETER STRONGLY DENIED IT, THREE DIFFERENT TIMES.

SO THERE PETER SAT WITH JESUS AND SOME OF THE OTHERS AROUND A DIFFERENT CHARCOAL FIRE-WITH THE GUILT OF HIS DENIAL BURNING WITHIN HIM. JESUS ASKED PETER THREE TIMES TO AFFIRM HIS LOVE, GIVING HIM THE CHANCE TO CANCEL OUT EACH OF HIS DENIALS. JUST AS IMPORTANTLY AFTER EACH EXPRESSION OF LOVE JESUS COMMANDED PETER TO DO SOMETHING TO DEMONSTRATE THE LOVE HE CONFESSED.

JESUS HELPED THE DISCIPLES DEAL WITH THEIR PAST BY SHOWING HIS LOVE FOR THEM IN THE PRESENT. THIS IS ONE THING WE CAN TAKE FROM THE GOSPEL STORY THAT CAN BE APPLIED TO OUR OWN LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS.

ANOTHER LESSON IS THAT- IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WE OFTEN NEED TO MAKE PEACE WITH OUR PAST IN ORDER FOR US TO MOVE FORWARD IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE. AND ONE CHALLENGE THIS PASSAGE OFFERS CHRISTIANS IS TO CONSIDER HOW WE CAN FISH FOR AND SHEPHERD PEOPLE

LET US REMINDER EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN SHARE HIS OR HER FAITH EXPERIENCES, AND SHOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST BY OUR ACTIONS. AND WE ALL CAN AND SHOULD BE WILLING TO CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER IN BIG AND SMALL WAYS.

THIS BRING US TO A SECOND CHALLENGE: FROM TIME TO TIME AND NEED TO BE RENEWED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. YES, WE NEED TO BE REMINDED AND TO REMIND OTHERS THAT JESUS NEVER GIVES UP ON US. INSTEAD, HE IS READY TO FORGIVE AND RENEW US WHEN WE TURN TO HIM. SO LET US NEVER FORGET THE POTENTIAL WITHIN US AND WITHIN OTHER PEOPLE. MAY WE ALWAYS PRAY FOR OTHERS AND OURSELVES. AMEN