

## John 21: 1-17

**21** After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

<sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> 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." <sup>17</sup> 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."

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#### "The Way of Redemption"

**Intro:** The disciples have been through a lot lately. The last few days have been an emotional roller coaster. First Jesus was dead, then he was alive. He appears to them in a locked room once, and then he comes back again inviting them to touch his wounds. Then Jesus commands the disciples to go forgiving others. Now maybe they are still ashamed. Maybe their own wounds are still too raw. But rather than doing what Jesus commanded, Peter grabs his tackle box and gear saying, "I'm going fishing." Back to the old life. Back to the old job. The rest of the gang slings their nets over their shoulders in agreement: "We will go with you."

**Move 1:** Right away we have a sense about what's going on. *When we are feeling overwhelmed, we have the need to go back to what is familiar. Back to the comfort of what we know.* It's imbedded in our DNA. Have you ever met a child who was adventuring away from mom or dad? We bend down to say hello, but then their eyes get wide as they scurry back between their parent's legs. They are going back to their comfort area. Or maybe it was during one of our Intercultural Dialogue conversations when we heard someone say that the meetings are nice, but ultimately we just end up getting in our cars and driving back to our familiar side of town. Back to our comfort we go! Of course, if we probe deeper we might also prefer to go back as a way of escaping reality. Once heard a couple of college students talk about their plans after graduation. The one turned to the other and said, "If the job thing doesn't work out, I can always go back to school!" We like to go back to what we know. Back to the familiar place. We see it happening when the disciples go fishing. Perhaps we've noticed it in our own lives too.

**Move 2:** Well, isn't it like Jesus to show up again, standing on the shoreline asking, "*So how's it going? Have you caught anything yet?*" Have you found the answers to what you've been looking for? What about joy, caught any joy lately? Or how about the BIG ONE supposedly swimming around these waters called, "purpose"? Had a nibble from purpose lately? But then we stare down into the empty nets of our lives, seeing that after we've spent all night trying to get a bite, all we've snagged is some seaweed and a few water-logged twigs. Perhaps it is then that we realize: we have spent a long time trying to catch a life on our own. But at the end of the day the nets are still empty and we feel like we've been skunked. Well, the disciples go back to the familiar place trying to catch a life for themselves. But once you are a disciple of Jesus there is no going back to what once was. He shows up again, on the shore asking the question, "So how's the strategy working out for you? Have you caught anything yet?"

**Move 3:** But get ready! Here comes the surprise. When the disciples cast their net to the other side, their empty nets are abundantly full. Do notice: They catch more than just 153 fish. *The disciples end up reeling in a net full of grace.* It is classic Jesus. Did you know: in all four gospels the disciples do not catch one single fish without Jesus' help? It's an odd thing for a bunch of fishermen! But it's how grace works. Yes, it is freely given, but we might miss it unless we are listening to the guide. Every year a group of fishermen would go north to spend a week fishing in Canada. Every year they'd pack all their new fishing equipment—bright, shiny lures, depth finders and fish trackers that would beep whenever the fish came near. Every time they'd spend the first couple days trying to find the fish using their own methods and every year they'd end up hiring a fishing guide to help them. After all, the guides are the ones who know all the spots. Might picture Jesus as a guide for the spots where abundant life is. The disciples' nets are empty, but after listening to Jesus they hit the jackpot: a net full of abundant life. More, 153 reminders of grace.

**Move 4:** Yet, the story's not over. Like a movie, the scene cuts to the redemption moment: Peter splashing toward the shore as he tries to get to Jesus. But then he notices on the beach is *a charcoal fire with Jesus cooking a meal*. As Peter smells the smoke his memory flashes back to his last meal with Jesus where Jesus tells him, "You will deny me three times." Peter is sure of himself: "I'd rather die with you!" he says. But we know what happens later when Peter is standing outside the courthouse. A woman asks him, "Aren't you Jesus' disciple?" You can see Peter's breath in the cold as he says, "No, I am not." Just as he answers we notice Peter warming his hands...*over a charcoal fire*. Our bibles only mention a charcoal fire twice. Once here. Once more on the beach. You see, Jesus is redeeming Peter's story: on the night when Peter denied Jesus there is a meal, a charcoal fire, and Peter saying "No" in denial three times. But on the beach we again have a meal, a charcoal fire, and Peter answering Jesus' question, "Do you love me?" three times saying, "Yes, yes, yes!" The stories are mirror reflections of each other! What is Jesus doing? He is offering Peter what Peter needs most: redemption.

**Move 5:** So maybe Jesus' question is for us too. "*Do you love me more than these?*" *Well, do we?* Do we love him more than the lives we are trying to catch for ourselves? Do we love him more than the shame we carry for not being enough? Do we love him more than the security of the familiar? If our answer is "Yes, Lord, you know that I do," then we will no longer be as concerned about our calling as we are for the people we are called to feed. We will care less about our agenda for Jesus and more about his agenda for us. You see, I don't think Jesus asked Peter the same question three times because he wanted to make sure Peter loved him. I think he asks Peter the same question three times because he wants Peter to know that even after all our mistakes, despite all our brokenness, God still believes we are the ones to serve the gospel. Redeemed people, redeem people. Healed people, heal people. Fed people, feed people. The question Jesus puts to Peter is a question for us: "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me more than these?"

**Conclusion:** The truth is, it is hard to feed others if our nets are empty. Difficult to catch grace if we aren't listening to the guide. Almost impossible to experience resurrection without tasting redemption. "Do you love me more than these?" Jesus is asking. Well, do we?