

***The Third Day* by Tom Berlin**  
**Chapter 2: *Simon Peter***  
**Rev. Dan Bader, Southwest District Superintendent**

*After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 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. 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. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 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. 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. 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. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 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. 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. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. (John 21:1-14)*

This encounter that we have of Peter along with a few of the other disciples is very different than the original encounter that takes place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' call to Peter and others who are deeply involved in their daily work and lives, is to "follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." The words from the song "*The Summons*" ring true to Jesus' question...

*Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown?  
Will you let my name be known?  
Will you let my life be grown in you,  
and you in me?*

What has seemed so amazing to me is that there seems to be very little hesitancy, questioning or reluctance within those whom Jesus calls...and particularly that seems to be the case with Peter. From the moment Peter sets aside his "fishing" nets to follow Jesus **he is ALL IN!** Right up until those moments following Jesus' arrest...what we see or experience about Simon Peter is one who is somewhat loud-mouthed, boastful, lacking humility, but he was also enthusiastic, filled with strong emotions, a natural leader...but most important of all is that he was **DEVOTED** to Jesus.

But as we engage our scripture which begins with the words, “**After these things...**” the tone seems to have changed. Peter is possibly at his lowest and most desperate moment...because the “These things” that John is referring to are the death and crucifixion of Jesus.

And though Peter had been witness to Jesus’ resurrection and thrilled with this unexpected new life of Christ...there was also confusion... What’s next. What role do I have. You see I can’t help but feel as if there is something that Peter just can’t shake. That there was something he wished he could undo...could take back...his self-realization that carried with it the weight of guilt, shame, and wondering if he was still worthy to be a disciple because he had denied Jesus...three times.

So rather than moving forward...what we find is that Peter and the others have gone back to what they knew...what was familiar...what was easy... Peter went Fishing. This suggests that Peter and the others in a way were discouraged, had given up hope and thus threatened the ongoing, transformative work which Jesus had called them.

Tom Berlin writes: “Had Jesus not met Peter that morning, Peter may have become hopeless. Hopelessness is the crucifixion of the belief that we are made in God’s image and persons of sacred worth. Hopelessness kills the calling of God we experience and the aspirations that come from that calling. Hopelessness carries the disappointment of what will never be because we feel that it is impossible to begin again.”

*Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare,  
should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in you  
and you in me?*

Truth is all of us carry within us burdens, regrets about something in our past...but it’s in continuation of Peter’s encounter with Jesus on the lakeshore that helps us understand that new life in Christ can restore us...can Resurrect us...and give us a new mission in life. So let me continue the scripture from John 21 beginning in verse 15.

*<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. <sup>18</sup> 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.” <sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”*

Berlin reminds us that, “When we encounter the resurrected Christ, we find a firm foundation on which we can rebuild our lives.” Rather than Jesus chastising Peter...Jesus continues to see the value, the worth, the capacity and potential in Peter that he recognized when he initially called him...and out of love he offers Peter the opportunity for a new start.

Each time in Jesus’ three exchanges with Peter...Peter affirms his love for his Lord...which is the same number of times Peter had denied Jesus. Berlin points out that “Jesus is repetitive” in his questioning, “so that Peter can verbally untwist the sin of denying Christ that has so securely fastened itself to his spirit. Jesus uses these questions to assure Peter that he has been restored and reinstated.”

But it doesn’t end with Peter simply being restored and reinstated...it comes with the reminder that Peter was saved and called for a reason...and truth is we are saved and called for a reason...to become a living witness to what Jesus does in us...for us...and wants us to pass on to others so they too might know and experience Resurrection in their lives. Just as Peter experienced resurrection...when we encounter the living Lord we are met with grace and love...we are forgiven, and we are summoned to feed Jesus lambs...feed Jesus’ sheep.

*Will you let the blinded man see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,  
and do such as this unseen?  
And admit to what I mean in you,  
and you in me?*

*Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell that fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound in you,  
and you in me?*

*Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go,  
where your love and footsteps show,  
thus I'll move and live and grow in you,  
and you in me.*