

Peter's hopes and dreams, his new "rock" identity had been dashed. His transformation had been cut short, he had failed and perhaps he somehow blamed his denials for Jesus crucifixion. It was his fault!

This story of the disciples recognizing their risen Lord gives us courage.

"Who IS that man???" How often do I still, as a follower of Jesus, not recognize Christ on the shore? I know in my head, that Jesus does not speak loudly---never shouts or "uses diaphragm support". This voice often talks to me from afar, from the shore, from the margins, or the sidelines. If I do not answer back, "Whaaaaat???" or "WHYYYY???" I have chosen to *not* listen, to *not* have ears that hear. I cannot recognize miracles or participate in them until I have received and, in turn, extended hospitality.... and hospitality energizes Creativity!

This morning.... I want to talk about the resurrection.....of relationships.....through grace.

I love the John 21 story because John is the only one of the gospel writers to include this final story, this epilogue to his intimate interpretation of the life of Jesus. I love it also because it is so human, so enduring because it invites me warm myself by the fire on the beach and to eat a morsel of fresh fish, and to imagine that Jesus gathers up my meager offerings—and cherishes them.

For me, this story is not only about restoration, it is also about creativity being the recipe, (if not the batter) for miracles!

Remember with me the weeks before the crucifixion. Peter was one of several, in John's gospel account, who proclaimed Jesus as "My Lord and my God!". During that surreal Passover week, Jesus is arrested, and Peter reacts with violence in defending Jesus, using a sword to cut off lash out against, to defend his leader. As you recall, Jesus reprimands him and restores the soldier's ear. Peter is later recognized because of that violence, as he sits around the fire with others. There, in another "tight" situation, one of fear in also being arrested, Peter denies knowing Jesus- three times—and then remembers how he swore- like a sailor, like a fisherman—that he would never desert this man!

We all are hungry to hear this story....because we are all Peters---enthusiastic, ready to promise it all—until the going gets tough, the storm comes up, and fear takes over. We all flip and flop like fish, one minute freely swimming and the next minute getting caught on the hook by Fear.

But here is the precious part of this story, the pearl of hope for us all:

Jesus, in this post-resurrection story, rejuvenated Peter, motivating him to *become* the Rock--a rough fisherman into a polished orator.

Jesus could have very well said, "You deserted me. Now I will desert you...." Instead he went out to find Peter, as he goes out to find each of us...again. Jesus went to restore this fallen friend, this, to renew him, to form him. Christ's grace flowed abundantly on the shores of Lake Tiberious that morning. God's grace is like a mighty rushing river.

So, how did Jesus extend grace to Peter?

The first level of grace came in his just showing up. Being present and open to the ones who have hurt you or to ones you have hurt is the foundation of forgiveness.

In showing up---Jesus provides Peter with another opportunity for restoration, for another conversation after death, for a chance for Peter to make it right. Mercy restores.

Peter is so excited, and the day is warm as he wraps his outer garments around him, so they don't get wet, and then jumps into the water, splashing like a little kid to get to the One who had come back...for him!

As we accept the incarnation of this same risen Jesus in our own lives, we, too, can show up...in places where forgiveness and restoration seem impossible. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is to just show up! When we are available to extend grace, and to receive it, restoration is possible. And notice in our story today, that specific words of forgiveness ("Please forgive me") were never used. Forgiveness is assumed as Jesus, after breakfast, speaks to Peter, only asking him to verify that he loves him "more than these", just checking that Peter still holds him above everyone else and is still willing to "follow me".

Today it seems "following" can take on a very shallow definition, an artificial Twitter kind of following. Instead, following Jesus today must be marked by actions and relationships, not by mere words, for words and truth have become cheap. Literal acts of mercy and service truly identify us as forgiven followers and followers who, by being forgiven, know how to forgive ourselves

and get on with the creativity and joy this world so desperately needs!

So Jesus first shows up, seeking out Peter, and then The second thing Jesus did, was to serve up some tasty vittles! Jesus showed hospitality to a despondent, grieving Peter and his depressed friends. Peter, especially, would have been sensitive to this, since he had offended his Lord, and no doubt was wrestling with this since the rooster crowed after his third denial the week before. He had acted and spoken brashly, he had been “Simon, Son of John”, NOT Simon Peter, the Rock!

Now, JESUS showed up....and COOKED BREAKFAST! He worked hard to provide a meal that would remind Peter of earlier miraculous times—Bread.....and fish.....153!! According to some writers of the early church this specific number—153--represents every single known species of fish at that time---to symbolize that every single kind of human who recognized and accepts the Divine has the opportunity to be part of God’s family, God’s Kingdom!

Jesus shows up, and cooks breakfast!! In cooking breakfast- Jesus **feeds a broken Peter** . Jesus knew a thing or two about brokenness. He invited Peter to warm his aching muscles by the fire, reinstating him to previous trust and gently reminding him of the time 5,000 people were fed bread...and fish~ a great “miracle”.

(Tell the Chittister story).

Joan Chittister, Benedictine sister, writes: “Once in a parish mission when I was studying Luke 7:11-17, (the miracle where Jesus brought back the widow’s dead son.) with a large group, someone called out harshly, “Have you ever brought someone back from the dead?” She had been saying that life happens when we are interrupted, and that some of the most powerful acts of resurrection happen to the least likely people; that we are the people of resurrection and hope, called to live passionately and compassionately with others, to defy death and needless suffering. And then this challenge from the back of the church.

My response was ‘Yes’. I went on to say, “Every time I bring hope into a situation, every time I bring joy that shatters despair, every time I forgive others and give them back dignity and the possibility of a future with me and others in the community, every time I listen to others and affirm them and their life, every time I speak the truth in public, every time I confront injustice—yes—I bring people back from the dead.”

Jesus made fertile the ground for Peter’s full restoration by 1) showing up, 2) by offering a hospitable act of giving, and thirdly, by continuing the close friendship through voicing expectations. “Feed my sheep! Take care of my kingdom. Lead!” Just as Jesus entrusted the future of the church with Peter, so we are expected to entrust our weakest allies, our most human of friends, with our future together. It is only here, in the third stage of restoration, that we see forgiveness completed—in a creative, imagined, holy future- in community!

Now, in this final, intimate last scene after breakfast, Jesus asks this blustery, boisterous, passionate friend, Peter, “Do you love me? Do you love me more than these?” Jesus shows up, powerfully suggesting that all will be well, then he gives a gift of fish and bread, and finally, he entrusts Peter with the original plan--to be among the chief leaders of the new faith—and he commissions him as Simon, son of God. Peter, after all the pain and heartbreak of regret, was resurrected that day! Because of this encounter, he was able to forgive himself! And they finally got it—understood the implications of “fish and bread”, connecting it to the feeding of the multitudes—“Ya think there’ll be enough?”

In this same vein, Palmer Parker tells a great story I want to end with today:

First a poem by David Whyte- Loaves and Fishes

This is not
the age of information,
This is NOT
The age of information.

Forget the news
and the radio
and the blurred screen.

This is the time
of loaves
and fishes.

People are hungry
and one good word is bread
For a thousand.

As far as I’m concerned, that story doesn’t involve any magic. It’s about the miracle of sharing in community, an everyday miracle that anyone with

some courage can pull off. Here's an example of what I mean, a bit long but worth your time...

After a speech in Saskatoon, I boarded a 6 a.m. flight Air Canada to Wisconsin. Our departure was delayed because the truck that brings coffee to the plane had broken down. After awhile the pilot said, "We're going to take off without the coffee. We want to get you to Detroit on time."

I was up front where all the "road warriors" sit—a surly tribe, especially at that early hour. They began griping, loudly and at length, about "incompetence", "lousy service," etc.

Once we got into the air, the lead flight attendant came to the center of the aisle with her mike and said, "Good morning! We're flying to Minneapolis today at an altitude of 30 feet.." That, of course, evoked more scorn from the road warriors.

Then she said, "Now that I have your attention...I know you're upset about the coffee. Well, get over it! Start sharing stuff with your seatmates. That bag of five peanuts you got on your last flight and put in your pocket? Tear it open and pass them around! Got gum or mints? Share them! You can't read all the section of your paper at once. Offer them to each other! Show off the pictures of kids and grandkids you have in your wallets!"

As she went on in that vein, people began laughing and doing what she had told them to do. A surly scene turned into summer camp!

An hour later, as the attendant passed by my seat, I signaled to her. "What you did was really amazing," I said. "Where can I send a letter of commendation?"

"Thanks," she said. "I'll get you a form." Then she leaned down and whispered, "The loaves and fishes are not dead."

Do miracles happen? All the time! So, SHOW UP! COOK BREAKFAST!

Show up, cook, and bring new life--resurrect ! AMEN.