

John 21:1 – 25

¹ After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and he manifested himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will also come with you.' They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ So Jesus said to them, 'Children, you do not have any fish, do you?' They answered him, 'No.' ⁶ And he said to them, 'Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch.' So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. ⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish. ⁹ So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.' ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples ventured to question him, 'Who are you?' knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. ¹⁴ This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after he was raised from the dead. ¹⁵ So 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.' He said to him, 'Tend my lambs.' ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Shepherd my sheep.' ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.' ¹⁹ Now this he said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him, 'Follow me!' ²⁰ Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on his bosom at the supper and said, 'Lord, who is the one who betrays you?' ²¹ So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, 'Lord, and what about this man?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!' ²³ Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?' ²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

Questions

1. (individual) Write a journal entry as if you were Peter, after Thomas believed, but before you go fishing as in chapter 21. What are you thinking and feeling?
2. (LG) Share the journal entries in LG. Call out key aspects of Peter's state of being: guilty, self-doubting, wanting to do something familiar that he's competent in
3. (pairs) What do you feel competent in? How might you be drawn to do that rather than do what Jesus asks of you?
4. (tables) How does Jesus restore Peter here?
 - a. 'Early in the morning' – this is the third time Jesus appears at the threshold of darkness to light.
 - b. Jesus repeats the way he called Peter in the first place; see Luke 5:1 – 11
 - c. Jesus sets a fire. Peter had denied Jesus three times by a fire.
 - d. Jesus asks the same question 3 times, to match Peter's 3 denials
 - e. Jesus gives Peter a task, to be a shepherd
5. Look at v.15 – 23 more carefully. What does the first question mean in v.15? Especially the phrase 'do you love me more than these'?
 - a. It could mean, 'Do you love me more than the fish?'
 - b. Or, 'Do you love me more than the other disciples love me?' – this is more likely because of Peter's boast to not fall away even though others would.
 - c. (LG) Why does he ask this? (Collect responses. One reason is: Jesus stops Peter from distancing himself over and above the other disciples. Jesus is not to be used for our own ego purposes. Other reasons?)
 - d. Why does Jesus call Simon 'Simon son of John'? It's unclear, but perhaps because in Hebrew, it would be 'Simon bar-Jonah.' Jonah also was running away on a boat.
 - e. What about Simon's response? (Peter doesn't overrate himself. And he bases it on Jesus' knowledge of his heart – 'Lord, you know...' Also, it could be significant that Jesus uses the word 'agape' and Peter responds with 'phileo' in that Peter realizes the limitations of his love.)
 - f. What does it mean to feed Jesus' lambs/sheep?
 - i. How have you benefited from that? How have you done that?
 - ii. Notice that Jesus again symbolizes how he will provide the fish. Both in the nets and on the shore.
 - g. Why does Jesus give Peter a glimpse of the future in v.18?
 - i. Because Peter did want to follow Jesus, even to death. He will be able to do it later.
 - ii. Because Jesus is commenting on the natural course of development as a Christian leader. Typically, we think getting older is about gaining independence. Jesus says getting older is about losing your independence. This is very counter-cultural.
 - h. Why did Peter care about John's fate in v.20?
 - i. This gets at the question of our motivation, and whether our love for Jesus is big enough to be enough. Do we serve simply because Jesus asks it of us? Or do we seem to need other motivations? Like other people doing things the same way we are. Or getting other people's applause?