

Last time, we talked about chapter 20 and noted that St. John gives the Beloved Disciple a place of honor in his telling of the resurrection appearances. It is the Beloved Disciple who first sees and understands the significance of the empty tomb. It is the Beloved Disciple who outruns Peter and reaches the tomb first. We also noted that St. John makes sure we understand that Jesus coming back to life, ushers in a new reality for Him and for us. Unlike the raising of Lazarus, the cloths that bound and wrapped mankind in death are neatly rolled up and left behind in the tomb. When Lazarus emerged from the grave, he came out still bound in the grave cloths. Lazarus was resuscitated, but Jesus was Resurrected. We also noted Jesus, comes to the disciples, who have locked themselves into a room and three times Jesus offers them a new state of existence when he says: "Peace be with you". That is the difference Christ makes for all who believe in the midst of our existential journey through life. We can experience that "peace of God which surpasses all understanding". In vs. 21 – Jesus commissions the disciples to become Apostles. He breathes the Holy Spirit into them to equip them for the ardent task of becoming Apostles. The word apostle means "sent ones". Their mission is to tell the good news of the forgiveness of sin, made possible by Jesus death and resurrection. His self-offering has made us righteous before a holy yet merciful God. The receiving of the Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out our ministry of proclaiming the good news. Finally, we noted that vs. 30 is clearly the original end of St. John's Gospel. It ends with the incredible words: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples that are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." **Belief**, is the essence of John's Gospel. We believe in Jesus death and resurrection and receive the new and eternal life Jesus died to provide us with.

Today, we turn to chapter 21 – known as "the Epilogue" to John's Gospel. (read chapter 21). Chapter 21 is divided up into three parts:

Vs. 1-14 – begins another post resurrection appearance to some of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

Vs. 15-23 – describe Jesus encounter with Peter

Vs. 24-25 – provide the second ending of John's Gospel.

Vs. 1-2 – Lists those present – Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathaniel of Cana of Galilee, James and John the sons of Zebedee (John being the author of this Gospel), and two other disciples.

Vs. 3 – Simon Peter announces he is going fishing. So they get into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Vs. 4 – As day breaks (theme in John's Gospel of Jesus as the light of the world!), Jesus is standing on the beach but they do not recognize him.

Vs. 5-6 – Jesus asks them if they have caught any fish. They answer no. Jesus then tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat and they will catch some fish. And like the fishing story in Luke 5, they catch so many fish they can't get them into their boat.

Vs. 7 – The Beloved Disciple, again is the one to recognize Jesus. He tells Peter – "it is the Lord". Already John is making the point that if we are looking for the experience of abundant life, we need to allow Jesus to direct our lives. He can show us where abundant life is to be found. It took the Beloved Disciple to guide Peter to recognize that the figure on the beach was the Lord. Peter then dives into the water while (vs. 8), the other disciples stay in the boat to help haul in the nets full of fish.

Vs. 9 – Jesus has a fire going and fish frying on it.

Vs. 10 – Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish they caught to put them on the fire with His fish.

Could this be that Jesus is telling of the story of the ongoing mission of the newly founded apostolic church? It began with Jesus catching the fish (the 12?), with Jesus bringing people in to the fold through belief in Him. But then the work and the torch of Jesus ministry is entrusted to the Apostolic community, of which you and I are a part today. It is now our job to bear witness and to guide people to a saving relationship with Jesus, the Christ. So is John telling us that as the head of the body, He will show us how to become “fishers of men”. But only we can take that ministry seriously. So on the beach Jesus invites the apostles to add their fish to the fire with the ones He has already caught. I think so, but you will have to decide for yourself.

Vs. 10 – John tells us they caught 153 fish. How about that, St. Bede’s builds a new church and we can seat 153. Maybe we should plan the new church with exactly that many seats available. A very Johannine thought <g>!

Vs. 12-14 – Jesus invites them to the meal. The disciples know it is their Risen Lord Jesus. This is now the third time he has been revealed to them in John’s Gospel in a resurrection appearance (twice in the locked room for fear of the Jews)

Vs. 15 -23 – Deal with Jesus interactions with Peter.

Vs. 15-17 – 3 times Jesus asks Peter –“Do you love me?” And three times Peter professes his love for Jesus. This was undoubtedly Jesus pastoral concern being shown for Peter. Because during the Passion, Peter denied even knowing Jesus, forsaking Jesus in His time of need. After now telling Jesus he loved him three times, Jesus gives Peter the command: “feed my sheep” Perhaps in asking Peter three times if he loved him, Jesus is saying to Peter and to us: If you are now going to fulfill your apostolic ministry of sharing the good news of salvation with the world, **you had better love me**. For if we disciples turned apostles do not really love Jesus, your mission and ministry will fail. Peter is pained by Jesus asking him 3 times if he loved Him. Perhaps Jesus, knowing Peter’s guilt from having just denied him 3 times, wanted to give Peter a chance to exonerate himself by affirming his love for Jesus 3 times.

Vs. 18-19 – are a reference to how Peter would die. Peter would be martyred by Nero in Rome somewhere between 64-68 AD. Peter asked to be crucified upside down, as his personal witness that he was not worthy to be crucified in the same way as his Lord.

Jesus last words to Peter were simple and direct: “Follow me”. That’s it. These words to Peter, are appropriate to all who would engage in Apostolic ministry. Jesus will tell us where the fish are to be caught. He will bless our catch. If only the church will “follow me”.

Vs. 20 - 23 – Tell us about Peter and his encounter with the Beloved Disciple described as “the one whom Jesus loved”. Of course Jesus loved them all. But the Beloved Disciple, presumed to be John author of the Gospel, was particularly close to Jesus.

Vs. 21 – Peter asks Jesus – what about this man (the BD).

Vs. 22-23 – Jesus tells Peter that the Beloved Disciple may live until the 2nd coming (the Parousia), which the early church believed would be happening immediately in their life time. But John tell us that Jesus does not know. Truthfully none of us knows when Jesus will come again, we just believe that He will. The New Testament warns us to be ready, for He will come “like a thief in the night”, when we least expect it. As Apostles, our job is to remain focused on our mission to tell people about Jesus love for them and to see them come to faith in Jesus Christ. Peter and the Beloved Disciple (John?) remained faithful to their death.

Speaking of the end – Vs. 24-25 provide us with the second ending of John’s Gospel. They deserve to be read in their entirety:

“This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” Remarkable words for a remarkable Gospel AMEN!