

.Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes
May 5, 2024
Rev. Dr. Andrew Keuer

Sermon Text for Easter 6: John 21.15-19
Title: “Peter’s Past” / Series: “Things He Heals”
Schumann Hall Art Exhibit: “Stations of the Resurrection”

Core Observations of the Texts

- 1. The Goal of Life:** This text gives a high-level, 10,000 foot reminder of “what life’s all about”! In this narrative, John’s Gospel crystallizes what has been his main point all along. From it’s opening words, John has presented God as an eternal communion of Father, Son and Spirit (see John 1:1-2). This eternal love entered into human history when the Son of God took on human flesh (see John 1:3). But when darkness came against the love of God in Jesus, it buried the light – and yet, as John says in 1:5, the light did not die but shone even more strongly in the resurrection. John’s point is that the love that is in Jesus is eternal and will outlast all powers that history will mount against it. Jesus wants Peter to understand that the goal of his life is to unite fully with this love that can only be found in Jesus.
- 2. “I need to become more loving!”:** Jesus leads Peter to openly acknowledge and confess his need to grow in love. Notice that Jesus calls Peter by his pre-Jesus name of “Simon of John” (see John 1:41), which signals that Peter has reverted. Graciously, Jesus lowers the expectation of Peter in his third question (see 21:17) – whereas in the first two questions, Jesus asked Peter if he “agapes” Jesus (a Greek word that signifies intense love), in the third question he asks Peter if he “phileos” Jesus (a Greek word that signifies friendliness & loyalty). Peter knows it is true but grieves that he is not yet capable of deeper love (21:17). In 21:18, Jesus calls Peter immature but also says that he will grow stronger in love as he follows Christ.
- 3. How to grow in love:** Jesus gives Peter two avenues to grow in love: First, in 21:15-17, Jesus commands that he feed and shepherd His lambs. This means that Peter should identify specific disciples of Jesus whom he can attend to with the kind of care that Jesus would show. Second, in 21:18, the word “gird” refers back to 13:4 where Jesus “girded” the towel around his waste to wash the feet of the disciples. Peter will grow in love as he identifies lowly needs that need to be met. Doing unwanted jobs, for which there is no honor nor payment, makes love the motivation behind the action.

Questions to Ponder

- 1. Yard games!** What’s your favorite yard game, and why? Who is the most fun to play it with?
- 2. Love vs power:** Some religions claim that controlling the harmful forces of the world is the goal of life. But the bible claims love is the ultimate value in the universe. Do you agree that, in the end, these two are mutually exclusive? How do you know if you’ve truly made love, rather than control, the goal of your life?
- 3. Growing through care & service:** In the sermon, an example of “feeding God’s lambs” was the grandfather who arranged a “tea time” with his granddaughter and finished it with a blessing spoken over her. Who is a young person in your life who is open to being fed God’s Word through you?

Books cited: de Chardin’s *Building the Earth*; RN Remen’s *My Grandfather’s Blessing*