

Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes
May 12, 2024
Rev. Dr. Andrew Keuer

Sermon Text for Easter 7: John 21.20-25

Title: “Our Comparisons” / Series: “Things He Heals”

Schumann Hall Art Exhibit: “Stations of the Resurrection”

Core Observations of the Texts

- 1. Different callings:** Last week, in John 21:15-19, Peter was called to be a shepherd. Jesus announced that as he grew in love, he would glorify God with a martyr’s death. The analogy of shepherding implied tenacity, danger (wolves & bears!), long hours and nomadism. By contrast, John’s calling involved caring for and being cared for by Mary (the mother of Jesus) in his home (John 19.26-27). 21.24-25 adds the further detail that John mainly stayed inside and wrote books (the Gospel of John, the letters of 1-2 John, and later from an island exile, the Book of Revelation). To Peter, John’s calling might have looked easy and serene! Whereas to John, Peter’s work might have seemed crudeness and simple-minded. But both had the dignity of the call of Christ under-girding them.
- 2. The temptation:** Our passage this week opens with Peter’s glance over his shoulder (21.20), which implies a look away from Christ. Comparison is ALWAYS a look away from Christ! Peter asks, “What about him?” Peter worries whether he is treated fairly compared to other disciples. This worry springs from a deep doubt in the goodness of God’s plans. John presents himself as confident and at rest in the love of Christ, untroubled by the different callings that Peter and John are given.
- 3. Spiritual mothering:** There are no mothers in this passage, but life teaches us that one of the special ways that God grants confidence to be who we are meant to be is through the encouragement of mothers. Mothers are specialists at spotting unique qualities, gifts and interests. Mothers find ways to affirm and foster those special abilities. Spiritual mothering might be defined as someone in a motherly role actively affirming the unique call of Christ in the life of another.

Questions to Ponder

Icebreaker: What’s growing in your garden right now?

- 1. Unity and diversity:** In *Eccentric Preachers*, CH Spurgeon highlights that every Christian believes the same gospel and is conformed to the same pattern of holiness – but the manner in which that belief and holiness are lived out differs drastically. Today, the label “diversity” is often a Trojan horse carting all manner of ungodly attitudes and lifestyles are celebrated. How do you guard against false diversity in your friendships, while affirming a proper uniqueness of each disciple’s journey with Christ?
- 2. Cutting out comparison:** The sermon mentioned three types of comparison: one church to another, one person to another, and a person to themselves in a prior season of life. Do you agree these are all ‘out of bounds’? Notice that John and Peter learn from each other in chapter 21 – for example, John follows Peter’s idea to go fishing (21.3), and Peter learns from John that it is Jesus on the shore (21.7). How do we learn from the strengths of others, while steering clear of comparisons?

Books cited: Suzanne Simard, *The Mother Tree*. CH Spurgeon, *Eccentric Preachers*.