

Discipleship in the Gospel of John: A Gift of the Holy Spirit

John 21:1–19

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish.

When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

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, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him 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, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." [Jesus] said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."



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When this story begins, Jesus has died on a cross, risen from the dead, and already appeared to his disciples twice. Does it surprise you that Simon Peter has returned to Galilee to his old job of fishing? What is the possible significance?

In the scene depicted above, a group of rough fishermen are frustrated by catching nothing all night. Why would Jesus address such a group as “children”?

Why would Peter, after recognizing Jesus on the seashore, tuck in his garment and jump into the sea?

Which disciple do you think counted the 153 fish? After Jesus told a frustrated group of fishermen to cast the net once again, why is such a large catch meaningful?

What is the significance of this detail: “And none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they realized it was the Lord”?



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Do you think that sharing a meal together helped the disciples recognize the Risen Jesus?

Why does Jesus ask Peter three times, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (Why doesn’t Jesus ask Peter instead, “Do you believe in me?”)

What do you think Jesus means when he tells Peter to feed his lambs and tend his sheep? What role does the Holy Spirit play in a disciple’s ability to feed and tend God’s flock?

Why does a disciple often go where she or he would prefer not to?

What if the Holy Spirit is calling you today? Are you willing to heed the same calling that was made to Peter and the Apostles? Explain your response.

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