

Life was confusing for the disciples  
They needed time to think  
Jesus was crucified—they thought it was the end  
But then he was alive again  
They had seen him  
But his appearances were always short and then he left again  
What did it all mean?

When life is confusing and we are unsure of where we stand  
We tend to return to the familiar  
The disciples returned home  
They went to Galilee  
They went fishing—they returned to what they knew  
It was Peter's idea—James, John, Thomas, Nathanael, and 2 more joined him

But it had been a long night  
They had been out all night and had nothing to show for all their work  
As they came close to land they saw some one standing on shore by a small fire  
He shouted across the lake to see if they'd had any luck  
No, their nets were empty

He told them to cast their nets over the other side  
Why not? It can't hurt  
Suddenly the nets were full of large fish  
John looked up at the Stranger on the shore  
He remembered there was only one man who was able to do such a miracle  
He recognized the second miraculous catch because there had been another one  
Long ago, but vivid in his memory  
*"It is the Lord!"* John said to Peter

Peter grabbed the coat he had taken off earlier and dived into the water  
Peter made it to shore only to find a breakfast of fish and bread ready on the fire  
The disciples were close behind, pulling the huge catch of fish

Peter always was the impulsive one—jumping into the lake and going to Jesus  
This time it has more to do with repentance than zeal  
At Jesus' darkest hour Peter had deserted him  
Peter had gone back on his word—Peter's bold promise  
He told Jesus that he would follow him anywhere  
But then he denied him three times when he played it safe  
Three times he said he did not know the man being crucified

Jesus is cooking breakfast and invites them to bring more fish and to join him for breakfast

After breakfast, Jesus asked Peter a question

*“Peter, Do you love me?”*

Three times Jesus asks Peter this question—*“Peter, Do you love me?”*

Many times the “agape”—“phileo” love in the Greek is contrasted

But I’m not so sure Jesus meant to shift to a “lesser” love the 3<sup>rd</sup> time

Both words are used of both God and humans

Both represent a deep love

Also, likely Jesus and Peter were speaking Aramaic not Greek

Aramaic was the common language of the day

Greek was the official language

It is a “in your face” kind of question

The kind you can’t get away from

Jesus knows that Peter loves him, but he takes him back to love as the basis of knowing

Three times Peter is given the chance

to reaffirm the love for Jesus that he had denied three times

In so doing, Jesus calls him to a new kind of love—deeper and unconditional

Three times Jesus tells Peter, *“Feed my sheep.”*

Jesus reminds Peter of his calling

You still have a place in my ministry

Forgiveness is understood—interesting that Jesus doesn’t say it here

Nor does Jesus confront him about his past mistakes

Jesus reaffirms that Peter is one of the disciples—reaffirms his calling

But he goes deeper—Jesus commissions Peter to be a shepherd rather than a fisherman

It's a challenge to a new way of life—a new forgiveness, fruitfulness, following Jesus

Everything will be bigger and more demanding than it was before

Fishing is what they knew—what they had always done—it was their livelihood

In the beginning Jesus called them to fish—but this time for people

Now Jesus is shifting it from the familiar to a completely new way of being

To take up Jesus' work as the Shepherd—the Good Shepherd

Peter's transformation from fisherman to shepherd comes through facing his past

In facing his own sin and receiving the forgiveness, Peter is given new work

Without asking for repentance or forgiveness...

Jesus matches the 3 denials with 3 questions and meets Peter at his pain

In that, Jesus gives him a newly commissioned life—new work for the Kingdom

Peter is to go forth as shepherd and feed the sheep—feed the followers of Jesus

Peter is to take up Jesus' work as the Shepherd

It will be harder and all-consuming—even dangerous, but important work

To the followers of Jesus—we face the same question...

We can continue as we were...

Or we can face the searching questions—those "in your face" questions

"Do you love me?"

Do we then allow Jesus to go to the root of our rebellion, denial, sin, brokenness, etc.?  
Do we let Jesus' love go fully to the source of our pain?  
In honestly answering the question—we are both forgiven and given new work to do  
We too are invited to take up the work of the Good Shepherd—of Jesus  
To go forth and feed the sheep  
Like for Peter, it will be much greater work than before and demand everything  
It is work to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth

As Jesus and Peter walk along  
Peter looks back and sees John following them  
Peter's competitive spirit rises up and he asks, "*What about him?*"  
*"That's not the point," Jesus says. "You follow Me."*

We identify with Peter because he is so obviously human  
We all have a past  
We have all done things we regret  
We wish we could remove them from history but we can't  
We have all failed to follow Christ  
Christ gives us the opportunity to move past that  
Jesus comes to us—wherever we are—wherever we have run to hide  
Jesus shows himself to us in familiar ways  
Forgiveness is understood—for us too  
Do you love me?—It's here that Jesus is in our face—not when we first meet him  
He knows we do—But Jesus takes us past the stuck place  
Immediately Jesus reaffirms our calling—***and gives us new work***  
...Then follow me—be my people—live as my people—feed my sheep  
Live as I lived—take up my work—be the Shepherd for my sheep  
Let me live fully in you and through you  
Your life will change and be full of my work  
This demanding work will bring about the Kingdom of God in Seattle

Jesus is calling us as North Seattle Friends to take our full place as Leaders in the Kingdom

***Jesus asks, "Do you love me?"***  
***Then go and feed my sheep!***