



SCRIPTURE + SHARED

Week 8 – John 20:24-21:25

Day 1 – John 20:24-31

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Understanding the Passage:

This passage contains the narrative for which the disciple Thomas is most commonly known. It is worth pointing out that the other disciples also doubted Mary’s earlier announcement that she had seen the risen Lord. Thus, Thomas is not acting differently than the other disciples. Thomas is demanding physical proof, amplified by his somewhat graphical request, to touch the hands and side of Jesus in order to believe. This will prove two things for the questioning disciples. First, the person they saw was indeed Jesus their Lord; second, that Jesus was in the flesh, resurrected and not just as a spirit. The scars of the crucifixion would provide the testimony that Thomas needs in order to allow himself to hope in the good news that Jesus is risen.

In a touching exchange, Jesus provides Thomas with exactly what he needs in order to believe. This compels him to move from unbelief to belief. Having now had his doubts removed, Thomas boldly proclaims that Jesus is “his Lord and his God.” Jesus does not correct Thomas by suggesting that he is anything less than God in the flesh, confirming that what Thomas says about Jesus is true.

This story invites us to put ourselves in Thomas’ shoes by asking the reader: what do I require in order to believe in the risen Lord? We can all empathize with the doubting disciple when we consider aspects of the Christian faith that are hard for us to believe without concrete evidence. For those of us who struggle with doubt, it should be a comfort to see that Jesus is not rejecting Thomas because of his doubt, but instead offering himself, the very thing he needs in order to believe.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Are you sympathetic to Thomas in this passage or feel as though he was being unreasonable?
2. What is something about the Christian faith that you find difficult to believe?
3. What would you need in order to move from doubting to boldly testifying about your faith?

Day 2 – John 21:1-8

¹After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

Understanding the Passage:

Here the miraculous catch of fish functions analogously to the miracle at the wedding in Cana where Jesus turns the water into wine (2:1-11). In both stories the miracle is the vehicle for the revelation of who Jesus truly is. Jesus' first and last revelatory acts in the Gospel of John are both miracles of abundance in Galilee. All of the other resurrection appearances in John 20 take place in Jerusalem. This appearance in John 21 takes place in Galilee at the Sea of Tiberius, which gives Jesus' works a nice sense of symmetry and reveals to the reader that Jesus' appearances were not limited to only Jerusalem.

In this text we find the disciples returning to their homes to resume the work they were doing before Jesus called them to follow him. This scene serves as a sort of reinstatement for the disciples to be the "fishers of humanity" that Jesus has called them to be once again. The fact that they, who by trade were fishermen, were unable to catch any fish, but suddenly found their nets overloaded after following Jesus' suggestion, reminds us that apart from Jesus we can do nothing, but through us the Lord can do miraculous things. After the miracle, the unnamed disciple sees Jesus for who he is and tells Peter, prompting the sometimes impulsive disciple to dive into the water rather than waiting for the boat to come to shore.

The fact that it was night when the disciples were unable to catch fish is intentional. All throughout the Gospel of John there is a reoccurring theme of darkness and light. Those who walk or work in the darkness are unable to see the true light of God. It is not until just after daybreak that Jesus appears on the beach and appears to them.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What jumps out to you from today's text? What do you find interesting?
2. Is the combination of seeing Jesus and the abundance of fish in this miracle significant? What might that tell us about God and us?
3. Ask God to reveal Godself to you this week and to work great things through you.

Day 3 – John 21:9-14

⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Understanding the Passage:

There are several things of note in today’s passage. First, the fact that Jesus is cooking breakfast for them is a very human reminder of God’s provision for our daily needs. Once again it is also an indicator to us that Jesus is resurrected in the flesh and not just a ghost or spirit. Second, the charcoal fire was the same type of fire that Peter was warming his hand by earlier in the gospel narrative when he denied Jesus three times. Finally, the breaking of the bread and fish for their meal is reminiscent of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 with only a few loaves and fish near the exact location in Galilee in chapter six.

Jesus’ preparation of this meal for his disciples confirms that he is the source and giver of life-sustaining nourishment. The fact that there were so many fish and the net still did not break is confirmation to the reader that this moment of abundance was indeed a miracle from Jesus.

Take a moment to imagine the nostalgia the disciples must have experienced during this meal with Jesus after the last supper. As they sat around the fire eating the bread and fish, and remembering the abundance and provision on that day when Jesus fed so many people so close to where they were that morning. Imagine what was going on in Peter’s heart as he went from being so excited to see Jesus that he jumps out of the boat in order to get to him faster, only to be instantly reminded of his betrayal once he approaches and smells the familiar smell of the charcoal fire.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What jumps out to you from today’s text? What do you find interesting?
2. Think back to a time when God provided for you in a unique way, what were the circumstances of that provision?
3. Have you ever been in the presence of God and been reminded of something that you knew was wrong? How did you feel God responded to you in that moment?

Day 4 – John 21:15-19

¹⁵When 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.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the 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. ¹⁸Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Understanding the Passage:

The opening words of verse 15 explicitly link this passage with the one we read yesterday and position it as a conversation between the risen Jesus and Peter. This final scene of the Fourth Gospel concludes the saga of Peter's denial of Jesus and the reinstating of the work that Jesus is calling Peter to do. The threefold nature of Jesus' questions for Peter seem to serve as a counterbalance or undoing of the number of times that Peter denied Jesus. Each time Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, and each time Peter answers in the affirmative. When Jesus translates Peter's love for him into the charge to "feed my sheep," he is reminding Peter of what he told the disciples in the farewell discourse. "Just as I have loved you, you should love one another." Jesus is calling Peter to put his love into action.

After Jesus reinstates Peter, he predicts the manner in which he would later die as a martyr by hanging upside down on a cross under Emperor Nero according to church tradition. Finally, Jesus simply tells Peter to "follow me," the same thing he said to him back when he was first called by Jesus to be his disciple.

This tender exchange between Jesus and Peter offers comfort to those of us who find ourselves denying Jesus in our own lives. Peter is someone who loves Jesus deeply but finds himself often getting into trouble because of his impulsiveness. Rather than continuing to run from Jesus after his denial, Peter returns to the one who he loves and allows Jesus to forgive him. There will no doubt be times that we stumble and fall short of who God is calling us to be. In those times it is important for us to remember Peter's story of denial, forgiveness, and reinstatement. After all, the next time we will see Peter he will be boldly leading the church in the book of Acts.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Imagine Jesus appearing to you and asking if you loved him, how would you respond?
2. How does your love for God relate to your love for others?
3. Who might God be calling you to love today?

Day 5 – John 21:20-25

²⁰Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" ²²Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" ²³So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" ²⁴This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Understanding the Passage:

The Fourth Gospel ends with Jesus telling Peter that the unnamed disciple will remain until Jesus comes again. Jesus' rebuke of Peter's question and his reiteration of the simple command to follow him suggests that the two disciples are not to be compared and measured against one another. Verse 24 is significant to us because it claims that the author of this gospel is the unnamed disciple we have seen throughout, or is at the very least, writing down the direct testimony of the unnamed disciple.

The final verse of the fourth and final gospel is a statement of humility on the author's part. The author distinguishes his work in writing the gospel and interpreting the traditions about Jesus from the witness of the beloved disciple. He is only one among many who have spoken and written about the works and wonders of Jesus' ministry on earth.

Perhaps this is why we have four accounts of the gospel instead of only one. Each of the four gospels tells the story of Jesus to apparently different audiences. For example, Matthew seems more focused on a Jewish audience and Luke seems to be writing more to the Gentiles. In the Gospel of John, we have a retelling of Jesus' ministry that differs from the synoptics at times in order to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus and the glory of his coming. From the beginning to the end of the text, there is little doubt that Jesus is God's son, the Word made flesh who dwelt among us.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. In today's passage we find Peter concerned about what will happen to the beloved disciple. Have you ever spent time worrying about others around you rather than focusing on what God has for you?
2. As you think back over this series on "The Book of Glory," what have you learned about the second half of the Fourth Gospel?
3. How does the uniqueness of the Gospel of John enrich your understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ?

Video Discussion Questions:

1. What jumps out to you from today's video? What do you find interesting?
2. Is it surprising to see the disciples returning home and returning to their old ways after the crucifixion and initial appearances of Jesus?
3. Where do we see John's use of "light" and "darkness" playing out in today's text?
4. What do you think Jesus meant when he asked Peter, *do you love me more than these?*
5. What does Peter learn in his exchange with Jesus on the beach?
6. Ask yourself this question, do I believe Jesus loves me today? How would I respond if Jesus asked me "do you love me more than these?"