

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself to them in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of the disciples. Simon 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.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered, "No." He said to them, "Cast your net on the other 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. That 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. But 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.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So 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. Jesus 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. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was 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." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A 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." He 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." He said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger you used to fasten your own belt and 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. (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

"Encore! Encore!" is the cry that goes up from an audience that has just witnessed a great performance.
It is a call for a repeat of some part of the performance or for one more number by the singer.
It is the cry of an audience that is not satisfied and wants more.
It is the call of an audience that is not willing to let the show end, that wants the show to go on.
It is a plea from people who do not want to go home and back to life is it was before.

That seems to be what John is doing here at the end of his gospel. He is reluctant to leave the resurrection and the risen Jesus. He finished the story in the first half of chapter 20, he finishes it again in the second half of chapter 20, but he is not yet ready to bring the story to an end. He ends chapter 20 by saying that he has not told all that could be told, and then he proceeds to tell one more story. In this passage he seems to be taking us back to earlier events in Jesus' ministry to see them in the light of the resurrection. Let's see how he does this in the 21st chapter of John.

FIRST, THEY GO BACK TO FISHING IN GALILEE ONE MORE TIME.

They go back to life as it had been before the resurrection and even before they became disciples.

The death, resurrection, and departure of Jesus left them with no place to go, so they go back to where he had found them, back to what they were doing before they met him...back to three years before all this took place.

They go back to what they know, back to life as it had been.

Some would say that it was their way of saying, "Well, that's over! It did not work out. Back life as it was before Jesus called us."

However, that was not the way it worked out!

The effort to go back becomes an experience of déjà vu.

It was like a flashback! An encore!

It was like seeing again what they had already seen.

They had first met Jesus when they were fishermen.

He had come to them when they were fishing, guided them to a great catch of fish, and they had worshipped and followed him.

It was like going back to the beginning of their relationship with him.

They meet him as they had met him at the first.

One more time!

They were at a confusing time in their lives, perhaps at a low point because Jesus had announced that he was leaving.

The only thing they knew to do was to go back to the past, to go back to where they had been, where they had started.

We all need to go back from time to time, to remember and relive the past, in order to be able to go on, to move ahead.

A few years ago Ben Johnson wrote a book entitled **Pastoral Spirituality** in which he has the reader go back to the time of his or her call to the ministry.

We sing, "Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love", as a way of reminding ourselves of where it all started.

In the service for the baptism of children I call on all worshippers to remember their baptism...to remember something they cannot really remember...to recall the call of God to them before they could hear the call.

Scholars have speculated about what the catch of 153 fish meant.

No one knows for sure what the number means, if it has symbolic meaning – it may just be the number they caught. No doubt it means that they will be successful in their work. Jesus had come to them earlier in a large catch of fish, had issued the call to catch men and women, and they had responded and been successful and the good news drew a crowd. Now in this post-resurrection meeting he comes to them again to assure them that he will be with them and bless their witness in the years ahead. Here we have an Easter encore that assures them of success as they go out to the world with the good news.

THEN, THEY HAVE A MEAL WITH JESUS ONE MORE TIME.

It takes them back to all those times they ate and drank together. It is a repeat of the feeding of the multitude with the loaves and fishes.

It takes them back to the times they had eaten together in Matthew's house...in the home of Simon the Pharisee...in the home of Zacchaeus...in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

It is an encore of the last supper Jesus had with the disciples when he had broken bread and poured wine.

John does not have in his gospel an account of Jesus changing the Seder meal into the Last Supper.

He has the scene in the upper room before they go out to the garden. Earlier he had given the account of the feeding of the 5000 a sacramental meaning.

It became a sort of anticipation of the Last Supper, and John put into his account of that meal the words and the feel of the upper room meal that he only casually mentions later.

Jesus in John 6, the account of the feeding of the 5000, speaks of himself as the Bread of Life.

Here the meal by the sea becomes a sort of repeat of the meal with the 5000 and the meal in the upper room.

It is an encore meal that prepares the way for many more to follow for them and for the church through the years.

Any time of eating together became an Easter encore.

He would still be risen and with them and with us when we eat together.

So we sing or say the table blessing:

Be present at our table, Lord,
Be here and everywhere adored.
These mercies bless and grant that we
May feast in fellowship with Thee.

Jesus was going from them and would not be present with them as he had been in the days before the cross and resurrection.

He had warned Mary not to cling to him.

He had not meant that he would not still be with them.

Those times of eating and drinking together became times when they and we know him to be present still.

He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

He is known to us in the community of believers gathered at the table.

For most Christians, the Lord's Supper is a special time of worship and an occasion for joy and peace in the presence of Jesus.

All this was built on the earlier experience of the disciples.

It was and is an Easter encore – a time when he met them and a time when he meets us “one more time”.

FINALLY, JESUS MEETS PETER FOR AN ENCORE OF THAT UPPER ROOM EXPERIENCE.

There was a real need for Peter to go back to that time.

There was a lot of unfinished business that had been left lying on the floor in that upper room, in the garden, and by the fire in the courtyard of the high priest Annas.

Peter had protested that even if all others failed him he would not deny Jesus.

He had loudly maintained that he would follow Jesus not matter what.

He had said that he would even lay down his life for Jesus.

BUT HE HAD FAILED!

Now Jesus was sending them out, but before Peter could go out he had to go back to finish that unfinished business.

Peter had been a part of the tragic death of Jesus, as had all the other disciples...they had fled in fear.

The resurrection had in some sense reversed the tragedy for Jesus, but that did not take the edge off the tragic failure of Peter and the other disciples.

He needed an encore of those upper room, garden, and courtyard experiences so he could get it right this time.

But when Jesus takes him back it is not to relive his failure.

Jesus does not ask, "Are you sorry for what you have done? Do you realize how mistaken you were? Do you recognize how weak you are?"

The question of Jesus that leads Peter and all of us into the future is, "Do you love me?"

He takes Peter and all of us back to the past, but he will not let us "dwell on the past".

We cannot forget the past, but we do not have to be burdened by it.

Peter had denied his relationship with Jesus three times.

Now he is given three opportunities to profess his love for Jesus.

Then he is given three challenges to serve the people of God as Jesus had done..."Feed my sheep."

What had been a great burden to Peter now becomes a great stimulus to love and service.

Here is what we see happening with Peter:

There is no scolding by Jesus.

There is no talk of guilt and sorrow.

There is no talk of cowardice and failure.

That has all been taken care of by the cross and resurrection.

This is an encore experience from which we can go forward.

All the talk of Jesus with Peter and the disciples is of:

Love, which is the appropriate response to grace.

Service to the people of God as Jesus had done.

Following Jesus even at great personal cost.

There is a saying: **Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future!**

Peter, and all of us, discovered that to be true in this Easter encore.

In some ways we can never get beyond Easter.

After the resurrection, we have to see everything in a new way.

We have to understand everything in the light of Easter.

No wonder John came back to add an encore to his gospel.
No wonder he had to add one more chapter to help fill out the
meaning of the resurrection.

That is what we are doing here today...every time of worship is an
encore event...a time when we:

Remember Jesus' call to us.

Experience his presence with us.

Renew our commitment to serve him.

As we do that, we go back to Easter and go on from the resurrection.

One more time!

Thanks be to God!