Last week, our guest speaker John shared with us how Jesus appeared amongst the disciples just a few days after he was buried and risen from his tomb. But to many of the disciples, they were still a bit skeptical and confused, and they would only believe if they had seen him or touched him in person.

Our text this morning takes us to one of those personal encounters that the disciples had with the resurrected Jesus. By now some of the disciples were contemplating what they were going to do next, now that their spiritual leader was no longer with them. Should they continue to do what Jesus had commanded them to do…that is to proclaim God’s message of salvation and hope, even though they might be putting their lives at risk? Or should they just go back to what they were doing before they met Jesus, while keeping themselves in low-profile and incognito. Unfortunately, if they chose the latter, they would have to start all over again, because they had literally given up EVERYTHING, in order to follow Jesus.

But can they really go back to what it used to be? I highly doubt it, especially after what they had gone through with Jesus? They were no longer the same persons whom they were before. Times have changed, people have changed, our lives have changed. We must move on and look ahead to what God may have installed for us.

In verse 3, Simon Peter, the most outspoken leader among the disciples, told the group that “**he was going fishing**”…and the other disciples who were with him would follow him. So they went out, got into the boat and began fishing. They were out all night but caught nothing. Now, you have to understand, that these were professional fishermen who had done this for years, even though they might be a little rusty. You would think that they knew a thing or two when it comes to fishing. So they knew what they were doing, where to cast the net, when was the best time of the day…etc. Yet, they still caught nothing.

Now we’re not quite sure though whether Peter meant to return back to his former career or just to go out for a catch for their next meal. But I’m sure in the back of the many disciples’ minds, they probably had wondered whether this whole ministry thing was all worth it, especially after what they saw what happened to Jesus. Maybe it was time for them to pack up their belonging and go back to what they were doing before.

How soon had these disciples forgotten Jesus’ instruction to them that instead of catching fish, they would now be catching people? That their calling as a whole is greater than their individual lives and their own personal needs. As the saying goes, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. These disciples were called to be a part of God’s greater mission for humanity. It was never about them individually but it was all about God, and God’s mission. Individuals are often called upon to make sacrifices for the greater good of the team.

After spending more than 3 years with Jesus, **these disciples were no longer fishermen, but fishers of men and women.** There was no turning back now! They had seen and witnessed what Jesus had done, and have been empowered to do new and extraordinary things, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Yet some still had doubts – doubts in themselves and doubts in God. How quickly had they forgotten what Jesus had taught them?

Perhaps like the disciples, some of us might wrestling with our own sense of call right now and with our unknown future. **The changes that Jesus called upon his disciples to make were more than a change of profession. It was a change of one’s perspective towards life and attitude in relating to one another and with God.** God will use us in anyway God sees fit, even those who may had rejected or denied him in the past…well, just look at Simon Peter!

Peter was the perfect example of how Jesus offered him a 2nd chance to redeem his failure – failure to acknowledge his personal faith in Christ, a faith that not only changed his past but laid the foundation for his future.

Up until now, Peter had remained silent after his denials of Jesus. If there was ever a test for discipleship, Peter would have failed miserably. Nevertheless, Jesus was persistent to the calling of his chosen disciples, despite their shortcomings and failures. What happened to Peter, proved to us that transformation is possible even to those whose hearts are harden and stubborn. It can happen to us as well.

A few years ago, I met a woman, who like Peter was also going through a life transformation of her own. Stacey, we will call her, is in her early 30’s. She considered herself a dreamer when it comes to her relationship with God. She senses God’s calling in her through the many gifts and passions in life. However over the years, Stacey has had her share of spiritual roller-coaster moments. She has had her spiritual highs as well as disappointments through her many life trials and challenges that she encounters. As a result, she questioned her faith about God and she distanced herself from God.

Encouraged by many of her friends and colleagues, Stacey took a bold leap of faith by enrolling herself into seminary. She sensed God’s calling in her life that one day she may be called to pursue her ministry but she didn’t know what and how just yet. She would just go with the flow not knowing how deep that water might be and wherever the current might take her downstream.

Although Stacey was baptized and grew up in a traditional church setting, she has taken somewhat of a non-traditional path in order to discover her faith in God. As she became older, she found church to be “dull and boring” and not a place where she could see herself fitting in altogether. As a result, after her “confirmation” she had lost her interest in faith altogether and began turning herself away from God. Stacey opted to take the “silent exodus” route from the church, while making series of excuses in order to keep her away from Church and from God. She went on to pursue her own personal dreams and passions, and while doing so, she would make series of poor choices and decisions that ultimately let her to her failure in marriage and the loss of her job. She even contemplated ending her own life, as a possible way out of her misery.

But somehow Stacey had her “Epiphany” moment when God spoke to her in a personal way. She got down on her knees and she prayed. Stacey prayed that God will rescue her and give her a 2nd chance in life. She felt this warm embrace as she **came to her senses that even though she might have given up on God in her past, but God has not given up on her in her future.**

There are many sheep that God has prepared for Stacey to feed and to take care of. She sensed that God was asking her, *“Stacey, do you love me?”* And she replied, *“Yes Lord, you know that I love you.”* And Jesus said, *“Feed my lamb, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.”*

Similar to those disciples who made the decision to drop everything and followed Christ wholeheartedly. Jesus wanted us to live up to our own calling and our commitment to follow him, even when He is no longer with us…physically, but he is still amongst us spiritually.

Jesus challenged his disciples (as well as to us today) that it’s not enough that we profess that we have faith but **we must put our faith into action.** We must never underestimate God’s power at work amongst those who place their trust in him. Like Stacey, Peter knew that he was gifted and that he was chosen, but Peter still had doubt in himself and his abilities. Peter must lay aside his personal pride and accomplishment and allow God to work alongside with him…to be shepherd among God’s sheep. **He must not only talk the talk, but he must walk the talk as well.** In the same way, we must feed the sheep, nurture them, protect them, and guide them to discern God’s calling within them. The only way we can do that is through God’s LOVE, as exhibited through our lives.

**By the virtue of our baptism, we have declared our total and unyielding commitment in Christ to be his disciples. No longer do we live for ourselves, but we live for Christ.** Our Christian faith journey and discernment is a life-long commitment and a constant work-in-progress. It doesn’t matter how long we have been a member or how long we have been baptized, **what matters is that we live practically of our faith, and obediently as led by the Holy Spirit. We live by Christ’s command that we love one another by feeding our sheep and tending our lamb.**

In a moment, we will once again come before this table of God’s unconditional grace and love. **We have been reminded to live by faith and not by sight according to God’s visible grace and tangible love.** Through the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup, Christ has made his presence known to us both physically and spiritually. We’ve come to recognize not only what Christ has done for us in the past but we proclaim our witness of what Christ is actively doing and will continue to do for us in the future.

***Peter’s story today encourages us to trust that Jesus continues to meet us at his Table, where he feeds us, just as he fed his disciples*.[[1]](#footnote-1)** We are also empowered to do great things through God’s nourishment of our souls, as God continues to feed us. This is all part of God’s doing and not ours, as we ***“Come, Eat, and Follow.”***

Through this spiritual feeding at the Table, our eyes, our ears and ultimately our hearts will be opened, so that we may experience Christ in a more intimate and personal way, until Christ returns once again. Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. Pauw, Amy Plntinga, *Connections, Year C, Volume 2 P. 231* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)