



30 April 2022

Becoming (John 21. 1-19)

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Thomas was there, and Peter, and they went fishing! Why not? They know it, they know what to do, it had been their livelihood after all, before, before Jesus, but maybe they'd lost their touch, fishing round for who they are, now.

Who are they? Who are they to be?

Overflowing abundance, we hear, no fish after a long night, then, 153!

Does Peter remember that first encounter with Jesus? That calling away to something else something more? Connecting with people?

153, absurd.

extravagance.

love,

then brekkie..

When I first came to Benedictus in person, earlier this year, the temptation was not to be myself, not to be who I am. to hide. I had a picture of Benedictus as very intellectual, very intelligent. not like me.

I thought I had to be like Sarah. I felt a little shy and inadequate. But, as I sit in community, daily on zoom and, less regularly, face to face, I experience the diversity, the love. As I listen to Sarah's reflections, and the reflections of others during Lent, I begin to unfold, into who I am, and what I offer this diverse community of human beings, striving, practising living a contemplative life in community. I begin to relax, to show my true colours, moving in my body during a hymn on Easter day, standing alongside Sarah and Neil and the musicians and the leaders of Meditation. Offering a retreat in daily life, and a retreat in Alice Springs. Collaboratively creating a Labyrinth workshop and, 'simply alive, a quiet space of creativity for busy people'.

There is something about being loved and accepted that empowers me and, I suspect others, to lead the life to which we are called, to be less defended and more open.

Karoline Lewis¹ reflects:

Denying our identity is an all too often reality. We deny who we are because we worry that we won't meet expectations. We deny who we are because we are afraid to disappoint. We deny who we are because we could be judged, even rejected, for that truth. We deny who we are because we do not believe that we will be liked for who we truly are, or that we will be loved for who we truly are. We play it safe around a lot of people in our lives, pretending, and rightly so. Not everyone deserves our truth. Not everyone can be trusted with our truth.

Or, as Marianne Williamson writes in *A Return to Love*.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world.”

And, if this is the way we feel with people in our lives, even those closest to us, I wonder the same might be true of our relationship with the Divine.

Karoline Lewis again:

Our first thought about Peter when it comes to the decision he had to make around that first charcoal fire, before Jesus death, is that he was terrified that what would happen to Jesus would happen to him. Except, of course, that Jesus had yet to be crucified. Maybe Peter was unwilling to admit his identity because he wasn't ready yet — not that you ever can be, really. Maybe Peter couldn't affirm his identity because the garden was too fresh in his mind, too painful, too personal. Maybe Peter was not able to say, “I AM” a follower, because he just couldn't believe it himself.

¹ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/do-you-love-me>

And so, Jesus shows up on that shore, hosts a meal one more time, and tells Peter, tells us, “I believe in you. I know who you are and I love you. And yes, you are exactly the disciple I need, the disciple the world needs, for God to the world.”

He might have said, “Look at the fish, look at our brekky together, look at the cross, you know I love you”.

Lewis continues:

.. nowhere in the story does Jesus utter the words, “I forgive you” because Peter hasn’t done anything deserving of Jesus forgiveness. No, the person who needs to forgive Peter, well, is Peter himself.²

And yet, forgiveness is perhaps not the issue at all. We like to fall back on it, frequently, assuming it’s that which is needed to fix a relationship, especially to mend this specific relationship. But in this case, a little more digging and some careful study reveals that what Peter needs is to accept who he is called to be.

A rereading of Peter’s denial in John exposes his true rejection — that of his own identity. The question asked of Peter is not, as it is in the Synoptic Gospels, “do you know the man?” To which Peter responds, “I don’t know the man.” Rather, in the Fourth Gospel, the inquiry posed to Peter is, “aren’t you one of his disciples?” Peter’s response? “I AM not.” As a result, the conversation between Jesus and Peter should take on a completely different meaning. Jesus does not blame or shame Peter. Jesus does not ask for Peter’s repentance. Jesus does not ask three times, “Peter, do you love me?” to remind Peter of his three-fold denial, to test him or to trap him. If any of that is true, that’s not the Jesus I know, I love, or in whom I believe. Instead, Jesus reaffirms who Peter needs to be, Jesus can see his gifts. And the disciple Jesus needs Peter to be is the shepherd now. No wonder Peter responded with “I AM not.”

² <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/do-you-love-me>

Today is the third weekend of the Easter season for us. Today we hear of another misunderstood character, another person who has been labelled, put into a box that is too small for him. Today we hear of a leader of the early church, Peter, the rock, Jesus called him. Peter who is a wimp, a betrayer, when it counted was asked in John's gospel, "are you a follower of this man", and he said, "I am not". We hear other stories about him too. I know he's married and his mother-in-law lives with him. We know he was a commercial fisherman. We know he was sometimes brash and impulsive, a likeable character jumping out of the boat to go to Jesus and then seeing the waves and faltering. Peter who wanted to jump in and have a full bath when Jesus washed his feet. Peter who saw who Jesus was and then re-canted from the need for suffering and death.

Today we hear of Peter in a post resurrection episode at the end of John's Gospel, possibly added on later. We hear of Peter once again jumping out of the boat and racing ashore. We hear of Jesus, Peter and other friends having brekkie on the beach, then, a special conversation between two friends. "Do you love me?" Says Jesus, "of course" says Peter "feed my lambs, feed my sheep. Follow me."

Peter is called away from his statement at that other fire in the courtyard before Jesus died, from his words 'I am not a follower', to this fire, this intimate breakfast, no judgement no forgiveness needed, just love, love on both sides and a calling out of Peter's true self, his call to be a leader, to become, to care for his community as a Shepherd, like Jesus.

I imagine they gave each other a hug. I imagine there were tears on both sides. There were certainly wounds. Peter is drawn in close to Jesus and commissioned again to lead in his own way, to lead from a place of love.

So these past few weeks we've heard of Thomas, also put in a box, and Peter, and Jesus. Jesus breathing peace and love and acceptance, Jesus present and empowering, overwhelmingly generous.

This is the third weekend of Easter. We have walked the dark road of not yet, and waiting, such a powerful journey and now in the church's calendar we are invited to lead our lives knowing that we are loved, knowing that we are called to be who we are,

knowing that we are seen and heard. "Do you love me?" Jesus says "feed my sheep".

"Follow me. Follow me. Come as you are and follow me. I see you I know you I love you."

I am here at Benedictus as one of you with my unique gifts and foibles, with my unique calling, one of you, by who I am, making a difference to this community and to our world.

"Are you one of his followers?" The woman asks Peter. "I am not!"

"Follow me". says Jesus.

Peter was not ready
to step into himself,
into the leadership that is there
in him.

Yet, here now, he is seen, known
loved
invited to more
then,
he steps up,
as he is, a natural leader.

We are known
we are loved
we are invited to be
who we are.

.....

I end with some words from Godfrey Birtill

*When I look at the blood
all I see is love, love, love.*

*When I stop at the cross
I can see the love of God.*

*But I can't see competition.
I can't see hierarchy.
I can't see pride or prejudice
or the abuse of authority.
I can't see lust for power.
I can't see manipulation.
I can't see rage or anger
or selfish ambition.
I can't see unforgiveness.
I can't see hate or envy.
I can't see stupid fighting
or bitterness, or jealousy.
I can't see empire building.
I can't see self-importance.
I can't see back-stabbing
or vanity or arrogance.
I see surrender, sacrifice, salvation,
humility, righteousness, faithfulness, grace, forgiveness,
love! Love ... love...
When I stop! ... at the cross
I can see the love of God.³*

³<https://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjZxZrmbr3AhWIRWwGHc6vC9wQyCl6BAgREAM&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Db7uKGZPRPp8&usg=AOvVaw10KlbVhkkEbqyp9NSySVpN>