

3rd Sunday of Easter
"Feed my Lambs"
John 21:1-19
4/14/13

I love today's Gospel.

Peter, the one who denied Jesus three times, is restored three times.

It's good news for Peter and it's good news for us.

Right after the resurrection Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples.

But somehow, I imagine, Peter standing behind the others, still full of shame over what he had done.

Can you imagine being Peter?

Can you imagine having to face Jesus after those denials?

Can't you just picture him, head down, eyes averted to the side, not wanting to face Jesus.

Maybe that's one reason he went back to Galilee, back to the boats back to his life as a fisherman.

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus' ministry come full circle.

Because this is the same place where Jesus first called Peter and Andrew to be his disciples.

Once again Jesus comes to the lakeshore, finds Peter... and says, "Follow me."

With the miracle catch of fish, Jesus is showing us that the kind of life he gives us, is an abundant, overflowing, resurrection life.

And yet the most powerful part of this story takes place between Jesus and Peter.

Considering Peter's shame,

it's no small matter that Jesus chooses to invite Peter to break bread with him.

This wasn't just breakfast on the lakeshore.

Breaking bread or sharing a meal was a sign of fellowship, a sign unity.

So when Jesus breaks bread with Peter, he is restoring Peter to fellowship.

He is forgiving Peter. He is taking him back.

Can you imagine the load that was lifted from Peter's shoulders?

Just think of the worst thing that you have ever done, and multiply that a hundred times.

Imagine denying Jesus, himself...turning your back on him, in his hour of need.

But notice what Jesus did with Peter.

He did not reprimand Peter. He did not scold him or shame him.

Jesus had warned Peter that before the cock crowed you will deny me three times.

But now, after the fact, Jesus didn't say, "I told you so."

Instead, he came to forgive Peter, and restore Peter.

And not only did Jesus come to forgive and restore Peter, but he also came to give Peter a mission. Three times he asks Peter, "Do you love me?"

And three times Peter responds, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

And what is Jesus reply? "Feed my lambs."

Peter was being called into mission. A mission of feeding and tending God's flock.

But this isn't a mission just for Peter and the other disciples and it isn't a mission just for pastors and church leaders. This morning this passage speaks to us, in a very clear and compelling way. The question, "Do you love me?" is a question for each and every one of us.

And if Jesus asked you this morning, "Do you love me?"

Wouldn't you answer, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you."

And as soon as those words would roll off our lips, Jesus would say, "Feed my lambs."

Do you remember the last baptism that took place right here at Community Lutheran?
Or do you remember the baptism of a close friend, or a son or daughter or grandchild or niece or nephew?

At each baptism in this church we ask the parents and sponsors these three questions:

"Will you promise to teach this child the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments?"

"Will you place in their hands the Holy Scriptures, and nurture them in faith and prayer?"

"Will you promise to help them grow in the Christian faith?"

When we ask these questions, it's really just another way of asking the question Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?"

Do you love me?

Jesus wants to know, if we as a congregation, will love the child or adult who is being baptized?

Will we love them into the Christian faith?

Remember the commandment Jesus gave his disciples at the Last Supper?

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."¹

That's the mission Jesus was giving Peter... and that's the mission Jesus gives us.

Think about that. One of the ways Jesus restored Peter.
One of the ways Jesus took away his shame and forgave him, was by giving him a mission.

Jesus was saying “you are loved Peter... you are forgiven...
and I am giving you a mission.... Go, now and Feed my lambs.”

Look around you Community Lutheran.
Do you see any lambs here this morning?

And just think about how many children have been baptized here in the last 20 years.
Jesus is saying to us this morning...

“I love you... I forgive you... Now, go and feed my lambs.”

Each child and each person who has been baptized needs to hear the story of God’s love
over and over again.

That’s our mission. That’s our calling.
That’s why we exist as a church.

To love and feed all of God’s lambs...
Here in worship each Sunday...
in Children’s church,
in Sunday School
in Confirmation
in our youth group
in our small groups and Bible studies
and most of all... each and every day... in our homes as we build each other up in love.

This morning Jesus is asking you and me, “Do you love me?”
And we say, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

And Jesus says to us, “Feed my lambs.”
“Love and serve me... as you love one another, as you love the children in this congregation,
and the children in this community... whom we are called to reach!

“Love and serve me, as you generously support all the ministries of this church.
“I have a mission for you,” Jesus says.
“Reach out to all your friends who don’t have a home church.”
“Reach out to your friends who are hurting, or lost, or lonely.....friends who may not yet know
Jesus. And tell them how much Jesus loves them.”

That’s our calling. That’s our mission. Together, with God’s strength we can do it. Amen

¹ John 13:34b-35