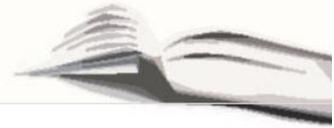


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John 21:1-19

*What I see in this encounter is that Jesus twice offers Peter the opportunity to again over promise as he did at the last supper (I will **NEVER** deny you). And so, when Jesus asks Peter for the third time, "Do you love me?" Jesus uses "philiōs." In effect, accepting Peter's offer of friendship.*



Year C

Easter 3

April 14, 2013

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [John 21:1-19, The Message](#) or [John 21:1-19, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click here, [John 21:1-19](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. George Hermanson, "[The BBQ on the Beach](#)."

This is the story of the "first breakfast."

As usual with John, it is important to not get caught up in the historical details. John wants us to **see** Jesus, to see the glory of God revealed in / through Jesus.

Note that this is the third time (in John) that the risen Jesus has appeared to his followers. Three signifies completion / wholeness.

I've heard it speculated (somewhere) that the number of fish, 153, signifies the number of nations / nationalities at that time.

Isn't it interesting that after having so far experienced the risen Jesus twice, Peter says, "I'm going fishing." Kinda makes you wonder which is the greater miracle: that a dead man was raised back to life; or that the male followers of Jesus finally "got it" and let the rest of us know their good news.

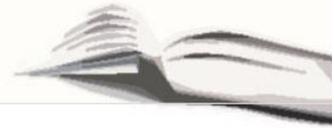
Many speculate that the encounter between Jesus and Peter is in parallel with Peter's earlier three-fold denial of Jesus. Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times; now he is given three chances to affirm his love of Jesus.

A problem with most English translations is that they don't distinguish between the two different words for "love" that are in the original Greek.

The first two times Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" the Greek word Jesus uses is "agape." (ah-gah-pey). This is the love of John 3:16 (For God so loved (agaped) the world ...), and John 15 (This is my new commandment, that you love (agape) one another as I have loved (agape) you). This love is unreserved, unconditional, unwavering and totally oriented for the good of the other.

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However, when Peter responds to Jesus, "Yes Lord, you know I love you," he uses a different word - philios - which means "friendship." So the first two encounters might be better translated as:

Jesus: "Peter, are you fully devoted to me?"

Peter: "Yes Lord, you know I am your friend."

What I see in this encounter is that Jesus twice offers Peter the opportunity to again over promise, over commit as he did at the last supper (I will **NEVER** deny you). Peter is human, and while we might aspire to agape love, we will never fulfill that aspiration. And so, when Jesus asks Peter for the third time, "Do you love me?" Jesus uses "philios." In effect, accepting Peter's offer of friendship.

Jesus: "Peter, are you my friend?"

Peter: "Lord, you know everything, you know I am your friend."

The love that Peter can actually offer - philios - may not be agape love, but it is good enough love. Jesus accepts us as we are; there is no need to pretend that we are perfect (as much as we might aspire to it).

The text is rich with many details that lend themselves to much imagining - and hopefully - some revelation of God's grace:

When do I / we ...

- See but fail to recognize the presence of God's offer of new life-raised-from-death?
- Persist in fruitless work / relationships?
- Learn from others to see the Christ?
- Behave foolishly because of joy?
- Bring my portion to the common good?
- Face my failings and faults and nonetheless also receive my purpose in life?
- Accept the binding / bonding to Christ and the consequences that follow?

David Ewart,

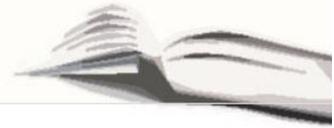
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Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John, see link below, pages 287-290.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

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John 21:1-19 (NRSV)

¹ After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ 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.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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.

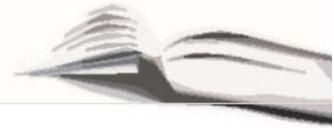
⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² 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. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ 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." ¹⁶ 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." ¹⁷ 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." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very 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."

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John 21:1-19 (The Message)

¹ After this, Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time at the Tiberias Sea (the Sea of Galilee). This is how he did it: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the brothers Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter announced, "I'm going fishing."

The rest of them replied, "We're going with you." They went out and got in the boat. They caught nothing that night. ⁴ When the sun came up, Jesus was standing on the beach, but they didn't recognize him.

⁵ Jesus spoke to them: "Good morning! Did you catch anything for breakfast?"

They answered, "No."

⁶ He said, "Throw the net off the right side of the boat and see what happens."

They did what he said. All of a sudden there were so many fish in it, they weren't strong enough to pull it in.

⁷ Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Master!"

When Simon Peter realized that it was the Master, he threw on some clothes, for he was stripped for work, and dove into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in by boat for they weren't far from land, a hundred yards or so, pulling along the net full of fish. ⁹ When they got out of the boat, they saw a fire laid, with fish and bread cooking on it.

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you've just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter joined them and pulled the net to shore—153 big fish! And even with all those fish, the net didn't rip.

¹² Jesus said, "Breakfast is ready." Not one of the disciples dared ask, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Master.

¹³ Jesus then took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus had shown himself alive to the disciples since being raised from the dead.

¹⁵ After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Master, you know I love you."

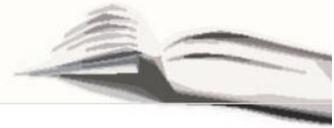
Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Master, you know I love you."

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Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep."

¹⁷ Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." ¹⁸ I'm telling you the very truth now: When you were young you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished, but when you get old you'll have to stretch out your hands while someone else dresses you and takes you where you don't want to go."

¹⁹ He said this to hint at the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And then he commanded, "Follow me."

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