

Healing At The Place of Coals

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READ TOGETHER: JOHN 18:15-27

For many of us, both people with a faith and people without, walk around with layers of guilt about many of our relationships. For us who have a faith, it is not just with people, but in terms of our relationship with God. That sense that we are continuously letting God down, that our mistakes are too big, not enough time spent with God, a sense of shame, not simply that we have done something wrong, but that we are wrong in our very being. It is something of that experience that many of us live through. It is also that experience that resonates with Peter's life. For Peter, he had betrayed Jesus, let him down at the pivotal moment when Jesus needed him the most.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

How does this way of being (for many people) resonate with you? Either now, or at other times?

READ TOGETHER: JOHN 21:4-19

In the reading we find Peter, whose world has fallen apart, with no way to repair what has been done, fishing. Peter is in old places with old friends, returning to old ways. Peter had gone back fishing.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

If we were to think about our own lives, where is the inner chaos happening, where have we gone back to old ways?

The story changes when the risen Jesus shows up. While Peter is fishing one of the disciples shouts: "It is the Lord!" And when Peter hears this, he puts on some clothes, for was naked, and jumps into the sea. Now surely he removes some clothes; they will weigh him down when he swims. But listen to what John is doing: Peter hears that God (in Christ) is here, Peter is naked, and he puts on clothes to cover himself. Here we are reminded of the human condition in Genesis 3; Peter is carrying around a sense of shame.

No wonder that Peter leaps out of the boat and rushes to the shore. He rushes to the only one who can heal his memories.

As Jesus and Peter begin conversation, notice what Jesus doesn't say, well why did you deny me then? Jesus doesn't punish him for what has happened. But also, Jesus doesn't dismiss what has happened. Notice the place where this conversation happens. John makes it clear in verse 9 that it is around a charcoal fire. There is only

one other place in the entire New Testament where this Greek word appears again; in chapter 18 where Peter, around the charcoal fire, denies Jesus three times.

Jesus takes him back to the charcoal fire, to the smells, and experiences of Peter. Jesus goes back to where the pain is, back to the stories of his past. Here at the 'Place of Coals', Jesus is rewriting Peter's story, together they are co-authoring a new hopeful story (the three questions rewrites the three denials).

DISCUSSION QUESTION

What stories of your past are influencing your way of being now?

What would it look like to have your own charcoal fire moment with Jesus?

