

Hi everyone,

Stories have the capacity to communicate in a way that abstract truth claims cannot.

In the reading assigned for today, the author of the Gospel according to John paints a picture depicting the meaning and significance of Jesus' death and resurrection for us today. Instead of being a distant reader trying to determine abstract meaning (or the lack thereof), can I invite you to bring yourself with all of your good and bad experiences to the reading of this passage for today?

The details mentioned are important. What John is communicating is that Jesus provides a new way forward, hope despite despair. In order to make sense of the reading for today from John 21:1-17 we must first recall some details from a story that John recorded just before the condemnation of Jesus leading to his crucifixion. So before we get to the passage for today, please first read the following parts from John 18 below:

Jesus was just arrested and is now on his way to stand trial. The following reading picks up at this point:

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, as did another of the disciples. That other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, so he was allowed to enter the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. 16 Peter had to stay outside the gate. Then the disciple who knew the high priest spoke to the woman watching at the gate, and she let Peter in. 17 The woman asked Peter, "You're not one of that man's disciples, are you?" "No," he said, "I am not." 18 Because it was cold, the household servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire. They stood around it, warming themselves, and Peter stood with them, warming himself.

In contrast to Peter, the following verses describe Jesus' faithfulness and truthfulness during the trial.

The narrative then comes back to Peter.

25 Meanwhile, as Simon Peter was standing by the fire warming himself, they asked him again, "You're not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "No, I am not."

26 But one of the household slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Didn't I see you out there in the olive grove with Jesus?" 27 Again Peter denied it. And immediately a rooster crowed.

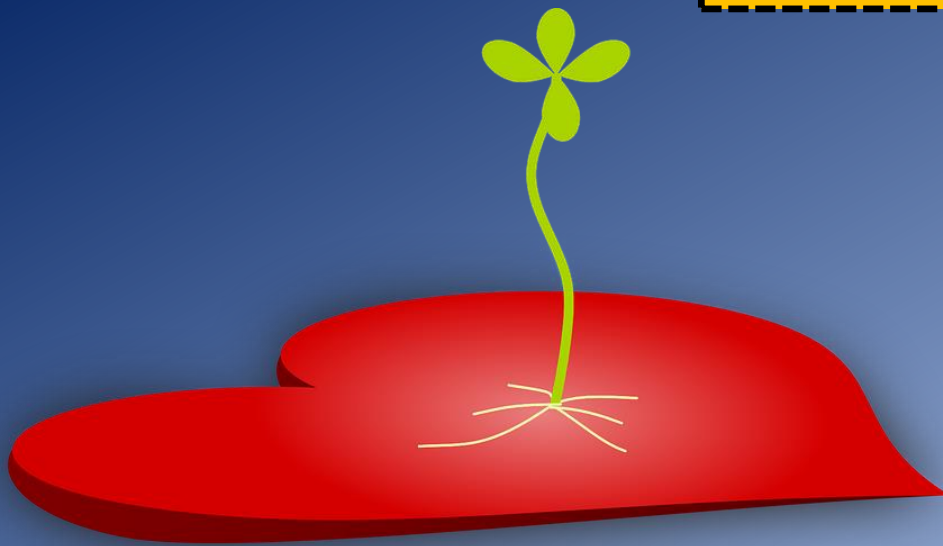
With this story in mind, read the passage for today following the link to the slides for today below and notice connections/repetitions/contrast:

[Sunday Apr. 18th, 2021](#)

I also included the slides as images below just in case the link does not work for you.

Andreas

**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER,
APR. 18TH, 2021**



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While you read, look for connections with the story about Peter mentioned before.

Hint: Look for numbers and a description of location/space

The passage for today picks up where we left off last week when we looked at the story of Jesus and Thomas.

John 21:1-17

Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. ² Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.

³ Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."

"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

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⁴ At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. ⁵ He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"
"No," they replied.

⁶ Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷ Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore.

⁸ The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. ⁹ When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

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¹⁰ "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said.

¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.

¹² "Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said.
None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?"
They knew it was the Lord.

¹³ Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish.

¹⁴ This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.

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

"Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him.

¹⁶ Jesus repeated the question: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter said, "you know I love you."

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus said.

¹⁷ A third time he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep."

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Earlier on in the narrative of John's Gospel, Jesus is described as the Good Shepherd.

Jesus says to Peter, "feed my sheep," because Peter and **all of us are invited to love others the way God loves us, like Jesus, like a good shepherd, self-sacrificially.**

Peter is moving from "I don't know this Jesus guy" (ch. 18) to "you know I love you" (ch. 21).

Throughout the narrative of John's Gospel Peter is portrayed as eager but unable to follow through with what he wants, says, and professes.

But then in our reading for today Peter exemplifies what can be called reciprocal loving faithfulness: in response to Jesus' loving faithfulness Peter responds with the same.

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But of course, Peter's failure is still fresh in everyone's memory. However, in between "I don't know this Jesus guy," and "you know I love you," the first sign of the new creation, Jesus' resurrection, exploded within the world of pain, fear, violence, and suffering.

Things do not have to remain the way they are.

The Jesus-way-of-life, the way of self-sacrificial love, is stronger than failure, shortcomings, pain, and suffering; stronger even than death.

It's so new that it seems strange and hard to believe within the old world as we know it.

This kind of love that is stronger than death cannot be proven to exist, only experienced and witnessed. We are invited to follow this new way of life and become signs of hope so that others around us can witness and experience that things do not have to remain the way they are.

We are invited to participate and work towards the flourishing of all creation.

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Numbers carried meaning in the ancient world, not just their mathematical value as today. The number three in the world of the Bible signifies harmony and completeness.

Through the narrative and by using the number three John communicates that Peter's sense of failure was complete because he denied Jesus three times.

This happened around a charcoal fire.

God is not surprised or upset by our failure and shortcomings. Making mistakes and falling short is part of what it means to be human.

But that is not the end of the story!

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Jesus connects with Peter again around a charcoal fire.
God meets you in the place of despair and failure and invites you into
a new way forward.

What is Jesus interested in? He asks Peter three times; "do you love
me?" Jesus is looking for this completion (signified by the number
three) of reciprocal loving faithfulness.

Jesus loves you all the way without holding anything back.
Nothing we do or don't do will add or distract from God's
unconditional love for you.

Jesus asks three times, "do you love me?" because this love finds its
completion when it is reciprocal, given and received. We live in
harmony when we give and receive love.

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➤ Can you think of charcoal fire moments in your life?

God wants to meet us there patiently providing the space
for us to respond, "you know I love you."

➤ What do you hear in Peter's words? "You know I love you."

➤ How would you respond to Jesus' question, "do you love
me?"

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