

Fed By Grace | Food in the Gospels

“Peter the Eater”

John 21.9-19

3.31.13 (Easter)

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So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. ¹⁴ This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ So 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." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. ¹⁸ "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

On Sunday mornings since just after Christmas, we've been looking at the theme of FOOD in the four Gospels. Turns out there's a lot ...in fact a whole theology of food in the Bible and the Gospels and that's the reason for the strange title of this sermon.

Today, we look at one man who was a leader among the students/disciples of Jesus. If you know about his life, the life of St. Peter...if you ever study his life, I think you'll find him PRETTY relatable ...Some people relate to St. Paul because they've had a kind of

dramatic faith experience or conversion but more people come to believe the Good News of Christianity the way Peter did... not by a single CRISIS moment but more like a series of little calamities and realizations along the way.

As we're thinking about the theme of food, we could note that Peter was in the food business...food production...he was a fisherman. Today, we learn that after three years studying with THE most influential Man who ever lived, after three years as a student of Jesus Christ...*Peter decided to simply return to his former life as a fisherman* (after all, it IS an honorable profession) but there's a big backstory ...and this becomes another watershed moment in Peter's story. And...of course there's food!

This becomes a study in some of the most painful emotions in all our lives, shame, regret, fear...BUT more, it *becomes* a "new beginning" story. So, if you need hope and NEED someone to tell you that progress and growth is possible and moving beyond failure and regret and TO the destiny God has for you is possible ...Peter's your man: Peter, the Eater!

Let's look at: 1) Food in the Story 2) Peter's *Trilemma* and how it was solved (how he found motivation to move on ...and how we can too!)

We've been seeing that when Jesus Christ teaches, He will often teach AT a meal or using food as an illustration. He eats with people and...things come up.

And in Luke's Gospel, when we first meet Peter he's producing food...*but not very well*. He'd been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus asks him to lower his nets one more time (Maybe Peter was a little embarrassed in front of the guys at the dock because this landlubber...a carpenter...was telling the fisherman on how to fish) but out of respect for the Rabbi Peter complies and catches more fish than they could fit in the boat. And what Peter really felt was that he was in the Presence of holiness/power ...and it scared him... "Leave me alone", says Peter, "I'm not the holy man You think I am" ...Jesus says, "Follow Me."

So Peter goes on with Jesus Christ, becomes a follower and ends up eating with Him all the time. They ate together regularly...even daily for three years. And it was at that last supper, another eating event (Peter the Eater) the Passover meal that Peter really put his foot in it...

When Jesus Christ was making it clear that He was going to be betrayed and crucified...Then Jesus sees what's in Peter's heart *and Jesus uses a food reference (wheat)*, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like

wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." But Peter said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" (Luke 22)

And seeing Peter foaming with bravado, Jesus Christ says, "Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

And we know how that very painful episode played out that, after Jesus' arrest, when Peter was outside the courtroom trying to get news about this mock trial and how it went with his Teacher, this young servant-girl asks him, "Hey, aren't you one of His students?!" And Peter says, "*Ma'am, I do not know Him!*" Then again, a man asks him...and again Peter denies that that he even knows what he's talking about. And a third time...Matthew includes the words, "A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them - even the way your accent gives you away. Then Peter began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed."

Luke adds that it was at that very moment they led Jesus Christ OUT of that fake trial and into the courtyard where Peter was warming himself at a charcoal fire and that Peter actually made eye-contact with Jesus, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

And now...the crucifixion has taken place...Peter and the disciples (except for John) were hiding... and there's news of a resurrection...that two-ton stone was rolled away...Mary Magdalene and others have seen Him...*risen*...just as He said! And He appears to them, the disciples, in the Upper Room, which had been rented for the Passover. And then the disciples leave the mean city and return to Galilee as Jesus had told them to do...and now...now...now what?

Peter leads the charge... "Let's go back to what we know"... They had to eat... they were competent and maybe even missed the "good ole days" so... "Let's do what we DO! Let's go to work... catch some fish!" So seven of them go back to work.

But if any of them had romantic notions of what fishing used to be...well those ideas vanish- after a sleepless, fruitless night and *now*...it's starting to *dawn* and that's when they *see* and *hear* someone and calling from the shore...a lookout man.

He tells them to cast their nets on the right (maybe they figure He can see a school of fish from the shore) ... And they do... and they haul-in a huge catch and then John (the

writer) recognizes the Man on the beach... "It's the Lord!" and Peter ties up his robe and swims to shore (100 yds).

Then, the Resurrected Man invites them to breakfast He's not a ghost...He eats...and wants to eat with them! And there's going to be conversation and this is when Peter the Eater faces his trilemma.

Jesus distributes fish and bread (*like we've seen before in the miraculous feedings!*) Then, after the meal there's a conversation that takes place between Jesus Christ and Peter and Peter is three times asked and then three times commissioned: "*Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these other disciples love Me?...Feed My lambs... Do you love Me?...Shepherd My sheep... Do you love Me?...Feed My sheep*"...Peter the Eater has to become Peter the Feeder!

The three questions is a clear reference to the three denials and Peter gets it... Peter had been cocky... had sworn to God that, "though all the other disciples may run away...I WILL STAY AND FIGHT!... I'll never leave You!!" But Peter got sifted...like wheat!

And now Jesus brings that to Peter's mind... He addresses Peter by full name... like He's drilling INTO the man, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these other disciples love me?"

I mean you said you did... do you still feel that way? Are you still trusting in your will-power and your above average strength?"

ARE YOU STILL COCKY? Peter, do you remember your weakness?

And Jesus isn't rubbing Peter's nose in this but He's reminding him, "PETER, your will-power, your integrity and your word ...ended in 3 denials."

Self-sufficiency is the alternative to grace...*that's how the self-sufficient life looks...* Same for us... can't we all see it in our own lives and say ..."I don't want to go back to self-sufficiency!" big motivation to move on to what God has for me and to rely on grace.

And see how Jesus Christ heals those self-inflicted wounds in Peter. Three times He makes Peter remember that other charcoal fire when THREE TIMES Peter denied Jesus... and now three times says, "I have a calling for you and YOUR failings will NOT defeat MY PLAN for you!"

I did not die for good people ... but for scaredy-cats and deniers...so come, join Me: "Feed My sheep!"

Again, that's a huge motive for moving on to to what God has for us... for not settling for business as usual... to say every day as I head for the classroom or the job-site or the office or to wake up the kids, "My failures have been great... but JC has lived in My place and died for my sins. My failures will not define me... I am pressing on to become who I am to destined to be!"

Another motivation: *Jesus Christ is alive and He knows where all the fish are.*

See, this miraculous catch of fish symbolized a lot of things... one of which was: on your own you caught nothing, with Me, your nets will be full and none will be lost. I AM NOT DEAD... and I will be with you and care for you. Even if it involves suffering (and Peter's life did!)

Another motivation: under the influence of My grace and the power of My Spirit – YOU WILL BECOME LIKE ME.

I am the Good Shepherd who laid His life down for the sheep (ch. 10) and you will *also* be given *that kind of heart*... when you get old ... you'll give yourself for the spiritual benefit of others" – obviously, Peter didn't die for anyone's sins but the same principle of self-giving love that moved Jesus will also move Peter... "I will replicate My character in you! And you will know a *noble* life of love... not a *plain* life of comfort!" A new motivation of grace instead of will-power!

Last, if you are spiritually...moving on, what are the symptoms... or signs? Well a lot of things we COULD mention... but two indispensable symptoms in Peter here: 1) He is *not* self-confident and 2) has real sorrow for his own failings

When Jesus Christ asked , "Do you love me more than these guys love me?" Peter answers in effect, "Once, I would have been competitive and self-confident... now I can only say, "Thou knowest" ... The gifts I give to God, are paid for BY God. If I love you it's because you worked that love into my life. *Peter is not impressed with himself.*

2nd- Peter was grieved (v.17) when JC asked him the 3rd time "Do you love Me?" because NOW it's clear that this answers to his 3 denials. He's not angry ... not saying... "OK Lord,... enough already!"...

He's grieved. His own sins are big in his eyes and that enables him to respond to sinful people in the way a shepherd should... even to tend the weakest of the lambs... Peter KNOWS *HE* NEEDS GRACE and he'll be ready to offer mercy...w/o being mushy... because he knows what forgiveness cost God.

NOW...don't get the wrong idea... Peter has more eating experiences in the New Testament...some big failures await him – a big lapse of faith at a Church picnic (Galatians 2) and a big revelation that challenged Peter's racism (Acts 10).

Peter and the other disciples move on... they never denied that the One who defeated death was real...never recanted even when it lead to their death... but NOT perfect... Living by grace isn't a perfect life... but it is a powerful life... a life lived in the power of the Resurrected Man. (Pray).

Listen: Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, *then will come about the saying that is written*, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now receive God's blessing:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.