

Easter 3C  
Peace, Seattle  
May 5, 2019  
John 21:1-19, Acts 9:1-20

## **RECOGNIZING THE RISEN ONE**

**In today's gospel from John, the Risen Jesus appears to the disciples for a third and final time.**

No longer stuck behind locked doors in Jerusalem, we find them instead (at least seven of them), back home in Galilee, their old stomping grounds, along the shores of the Sea.

Still dazed by all that'd taken place, an unspoken question hovers over them:

WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO NOW? They realize there's got to be something more, that they're supposed to DO something—but they're not at all certain what it is.

**When you find yourself in the position of having to start over again, what do you do?  
You go back to what you know.**

Peter says: I'M GOING FISHING and the rest of them say, SOUNDS GOOD—WE'RE COMING TOO.

So they push the boat out into the Sea and cast out their nets.

But wouldn't you know it, in spite of fishing all night long, as dawn breaks, they're still empty handed. It's then that they hear a voice cry out from the shore.

**HAD ANY LUCK? it asks. NO, comes their curt reply.  
TRY THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BOAT—YOU'LL FIND SOME THERE, the stranger calls.**

With nothing to lose, they do it, and suddenly their nets are filled to overflowing. There is but ONE who can be at the source of such abundance: IT IS THE LORD! And the ordinary becomes a vehicle for the extraordinary.

**The question arising from this story is: Where can we expect the Risen One to show up in our lives, and how do we recognize him when he comes?**

In her book Kitchen Table Wisdom, Rachel Naomi Remen writes:<sup>1</sup>

It's said that the Christian mystic Theresa of Avila found difficulty at first in reconciling the vastness of the life of the spirit with the mundane tasks of her Carmelite convent: the washing of pots, the sweeping of floors, the folding of laundry.

At some point of grace, the mundane became for her a sort of prayer, a way she could experience her ever-present connection to the divine pattern which is the source of life. She began then to see the face of God in the folded sheets.

People can most easily recognize mystery when it presents itself in dramatic ways.

- The person who heals for unknown reasons when all hope is gone,
- the angelic visitation, the life-altering coincidence.

We seem to be able to hear God best when He shouts... Yet mystery is as common as a trip to the grocery store.

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<sup>1</sup> Rachel Naomi Remen. *Kitchen Table Wisdom* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996) p. 282 f.

In [his] *Guide for the Perplexed*, E. F. Schumacher notes that the endless debate about the nature of the world is founded on differences in the sensitivity of the eyes that behold it:

**“We can see only what we have grown an eye to see.”**

Some of us can only notice miracles. Some of us can only see in times of crisis. Yet we can all learn to see God in the folded sheets.

She goes on:

Soon after I moved to California from New York, I planted a vegetable garden. I had never seen fresh vegetables except in a supermarket, and the first year I found an endless fascination in this tiny garden. I especially loved the lettuce which I had planted tightly in a square whose edges I harvest for dinner every night.

One evening I had gone out to pick the salad as usual and ran a hand lightly over the crisp green square of lettuce leaves, marveling at its vitality, almost as if it were bubbling up out of the ground. Suddenly words from my childhood came back to me, words that I had heard countless times over the dinner tables of aunts and uncles and knew by heart, words that I heard now for the first time.

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord, King of the Universe who bringest forth bread from the earth.*

Far from being the usual meaningless mumble, these words suddenly were a potent description of something real, a statement about grace and the mystery of life itself. Up until then I had taken this blessing as a theory or a hypothesis, someone’s idea of how things worked. I had no idea that these familiar words were simply a description of something true. - Naomi Rachel Remen.

**The first answer to the question, Where and how do we see the Risen One in our midst? is:**

We train our eyes to see him in the ordinary rhythms of our daily lives: folding sheets, harvesting lettuce, allowing the Sacred in some one, some thing, to reveal what we hadn’t seen before.

**The second answer comes to us from this breakfast scene on the beach.**

The last time Peter warmed his hands by a charcoal fire he was in the courtyard of the high priest, after Jesus’ arrest. Peter—the ROCK—who’d assured Jesus he would be faithful even unto death—denied he even knew Jesus, and he do so three times.

Now, Jesus asks three times, “SIMON PETER, DO YOU LOVE ME?” and three times Peter confesses his love for the Lord.

**How do we recognize the presence of the risen Jesus? Christ is the one who refuses to allow our betrayals and shortcomings, our sinfulness, to get in the way of his grace.**

**The very thing that we’re convinced will separate us from God is transformed through the Risen Jesus into a pathway of mercy.**

That’s how it is with Simon Peter, and that’s how it can be with you and me as Christ grants us the opportunity to confess our love again; and this very act leads to forgiveness and restoration.

**But the Risen Jesus doesn’t leave things there. Forgiveness, though a crucial piece, is not the end of the story. There is something more.**

PETER, the Lord asks, DO YOU LOVE ME? Yes Lord, you know I love you. THEN FEED MY SHEEP.

Recognizing the presence of the Risen Lord means responding to his call to engage the world.

When our lives have been touched by the Risen One, doors that were shut become opened.

When our lives have been touched by the Risen One, old ways of living for ourselves are shown to be empty; and his voice calls us to follow, to embody, a new way, HIS WAY.

When our lives have been touched by the Risen One, destructive patterns at home, at work, at school, are replaced by new patterns of loving and forgiving, relating and serving. It may be slog at times, but this is the direction is the direction the resurrection would have us move.

**When our lives have been touched by the Risen One, a new world begins to open up.**

Peter discovered that new world over breakfast on the beach. Saul glimpsed the new world when he found himself first blinded on the road to Damascus, and then healed by a sworn enemy.

This morning we recognize our Risen Lord as we gather at his Table. He's here in the bread and wine, for sure. But he's also present in the ordinary faces and lives of this community. It is here that he meets and feeds us, and sends us out to be his Body, to do his work in the world.

The final words of Jesus in the gospel are directed not only to Peter, but to us: FOLLOW ME.

Our risen Lord comes into our midst with abundant grace and abundant Spirit, equipping us to move beyond fear, beyond locked doors, beyond what has been, and to boldly proclaim and live his gospel of abundant mercy. Amen