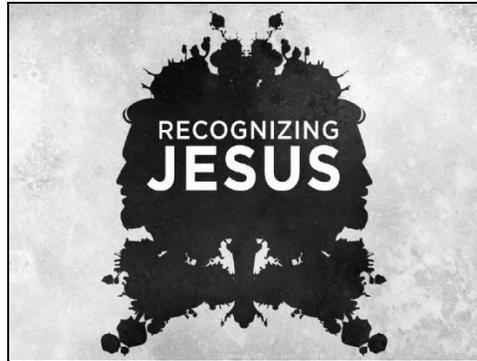


RECOGNIZING JESUS SERMON



Scripture:

Psalm 30

¹I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. ²O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. ³O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

⁴Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

⁶As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

⁷By your favor, O LORD, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

⁸To you, O LORD, I cried, and to the LORD I made supplication: ⁹"What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?" ¹⁰Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be my helper!"

¹¹You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,

¹²so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

John 21:1-17

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

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

⁹When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So 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. ¹²Jesus 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. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶A 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." ¹⁷He 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.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



RECOGNIZING JESUS

I heard you booed after the scripture reading last week! LOL! (Laugh Out Loud!) I'm proud of you. I would have joined in the booing about that reading in Esther, too! But I hope you won't make booing in church a habit!

This reading today is less controversial, but it may be somewhat confusing.

Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. How can that be? Even after Jesus calls them "children." They did not know who he was?? He said, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No."

Calling the disciples "children" is a reflection back to the fishes and the loaves miracle story where it was a child who agreed to share his fish and bread that fed five-thousand hungry souls.

But the disciples don't seem to get that connection that Jesus subtly makes, so, he tells them to fish on the other side of the boat. When they can't haul up the nets because there are so many fish, suddenly, the disciple that Jesus especially loved, recognizes him, and tells Simon Peter, who suddenly jumps in the water and swims to see Jesus. Then they are fed by Jesus with bread and fish.

To recognize Jesus, it took a miracle catch of fish, and a beloved who knows the only one capable of such a miracle is Jesus. Peter then literally jumps at the chance to be reconciled with

Jesus. You can imagine he has been feeling guilty for denying he knew Jesus ever since Jesus was arrested and crucified. So, Peter can't wait to receive forgiveness from him.

PETER WAS READY TO APOLOGIZE

Peter was ready to apologize, but Jesus feeds Peter first before talking to him. Then he questions him about his love. Rather than say, "I forgive you for denying me three times," Jesus asks him, "Do you Love Me?"

And each time Peter replies, "Yes, Lord, of course!" Jesus reminds him to tend to and feed his sheep. That trust in Peter to do the Lord's work was an act of reconciliation.

This was also an authenticating act on the part of Jesus, too. When he asks Peter about his loving devotion and then commands him to care for his flock of followers, it is clear this is the real Jesus in their presence. No imposter would know to first mention the love of God and second restate love of neighbor but in a different way.

IT IS REALLY JESUS

So how do we recognize Jesus? Do you see him in the picture on page one? In this passage there were five things he did and said that help us to recognize it is really Jesus.

1. He called them endearing names as a parent to a child.
2. He gifted them with a miracle amount of fish.
3. He nurtured them by cooking and serving them a meal.
4. Jesus forgave them even though all but the one he especially loved deserted him on the cross. Peter wasn't the only one needing forgiveness. The rest of the disciples needed to be forgiven as well. Yet, Jesus doesn't confront Peter. Instead, he engages in a reconciliation practice with him right away.
5. Jesus emphasized that to follow his way they must first love him, and then care for his flock and serve them.

SENT TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

This passage contains the content of a remedial lesson for the disciples so they would be properly prepared to be sent out as missionaries to fearlessly spread the Good News of Jesus. They needed this pep talk from Jesus and the nurturing and reassurance that all was not lost. Christ assured them he was alive and living with and through them from that time forward. Without that reassurance and recognition, this rag tag group would have just gone back to fishing and forgotten about their call to spread the gospel.

WHERE DO WE RECOGNIZE JESUS AMONG US?

We can recognize Jesus working and living with and through us even today. So, where do you recognize Jesus among us? Do you have any ideas?

How about when you serve the morning breakfast to the hungry high schoolers? Jesus is there, like he was on the shore cooking breakfast in this passage.

When you give your offering to the church, Jesus is in the inspiration for the giving.

When you are peaceful, courteous, encouraging and positive, Jesus is there in those attitudes and ways of being in the world.

When you look in the mirror at yourself and smile, Jesus is there encouraging you to love yourself as God loves you.

Can you recognize Jesus in one another? Look to your right or look to your left. Wherever there is a close person. Look deeply into their eyes. If you can see love, caring, and peacefulness there, you are looking at Jesus within your neighbor.

Barbara Brown Taylor in her new book *Holy Envy* says:

"My baseline for being a Christian is to extend the same care for every human being that I wish for myself, to treat every human being as if he or she were Jesus in disguise."

And when I saw this news story, I recognized Jesus in this young man who responded sacrificially in this terrible school shooting crisis situation last week:

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/01/us/uncc-victims-shooting-riley-howell/index.html>

DECLARATION OF UNITY

Another place I recognize Jesus is in the face and actions of my Muslim friend Moe. Remember him? After the mass shooting of all the Muslims in New Zealand, my friend, Mohammed Jabari of the Sonoma County Interfaith Council launched a program called "United in Kindness." It starts with a Declaration of Unity and a plan for sustainable and tangible actions. (I'm thankful our Session voted in favor of joining two-hundred-fifty other signatures who signed on to this declaration so far.)

The main objective of this declaration is to bring people together in ways that will build

bonds that help dispel acts of violence and hatred with the forces of kindness and concern. The council is engaging more than nine-hundred subscribers, over eighty places of worship, government, law enforcement, courts, school districts, local public officials, radio and TV and the public in order to get wide support. Moe says, "We are off the ground with excitement as we begin, energized by support from the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights that is co-sponsoring Sonoma County - United in Kindness."

The Spirit of Jesus is operating within this program to combat hate with kindness.

The Declaration of Unity reads:

We the undersigned believe that freedom from hateful speech, bullying, discrimination, and violence is a human right.

We believe all of us benefit from living in a diverse community.

Everyone, especially children and youth, requires a place to grow and learn in peace and safety, guided in kindness and caring.

We are proud that our half-million Sonoma County neighbors come from so many of humankind's backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions in pursuit of joyful and healthful living.

To sustain these strengths, we affirm trust in a social fabric that does not permit harm to individuals and groups based on distinctions of ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual preference, and socio-economic position.

We call on all Sonoma County residents to find ways to create this pluralistic social fabric. We call on our leaders in education, government, business, health, and faith to build, through education and initiatives in their areas of influence, a county that honors human rights.

In recognition of these desires for unity, we jointly declare Sonoma County — United in Kindness.

Amen

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen



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