

Restoration of the Rock

Sunday, Easter 3, Year C

Acts 9:1-22; Revelation 5:(1-7)8-14; John 21:1-14(15-19)

May 1, 2022

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

On Lora's parents old home place, there was much time spent hunting for fossils.

Now, growing up, I learned about fossils in school. We learned about several major fossil finds; dinosaurs, mammoths, and the like.

My impression was that, since these kinds of finds seemed rare, that fossils must also be a rare thing to find.

Then, I found and married Lora. No, she's not a fossil. But, my goodness, do we have a collection now. Plants, shells, seeds... all kinds of fossils.

But, Lora's prized fossil is a doozy. No, she didn't find a dinosaur. But a huge fossil of a giant ancient fern... at least, I think that's what it was.

She spent years digging at it. Uncovering it, then having to go back and do it again as time and rain would fill her work back in.

Finally, her dad helped her pull it out using his truck. Then, later, they found another large, piece of that fossil. Then another.

Wouldn't it be awesome to be able to put those three large rocks together and make one solid fossil. A solid testament to the image left behind by that plant so long ago.

Pastor, that's a nice story, and while your family history is interesting, where are you going with this. Honestly, I tell you that story because that is what came to mind when I was contemplating our Gospel reading for this morning.

Why? Well, hopefully you'll see. And, you'll probably be able to put it all together before I get done. But, be patient with me as I lag behind.

Today, we have Jesus appearing to the disciples again. The disciples, apparently no longer terribly afraid, had gone home. Peter seemingly felt the need to do something. John doesn't tell us why, but we can imagine. With all the intense things that had happened, perhaps Peter needed to do something he knew, and loved. Maybe after being behind locked doors, the sea gave him a sense of freedom and normalcy. I think we all need that from time to time.

But, for whatever reason, Peter makes an announcement, "*I'm going fishing.*" Those with him go along. But, they caught nothing. It was a bad night for fishing.

As the sun is coming up, about the time the rooster would crow, they hear a voice yelling toward them. Being only about 300 feet away, they can make out the words, "*Children, do you have any fish?*"

Not an odd request. They were fisherman, after all. I'm sure they would occasionally get the eager buyer standing on the shore as they came in from a night of fishing, since, that was when they would normally do their fishing.

Only, this time, there would be no sale. They had nothing in the boat. So, they answer, "*Nope. We didn't catch a thing.*"

"*Throw your net on the other side,*" comes the voice.

There must have been something familiar about that request, because they do it. And, they were unable to haul it in because there were so many fish in their net. Not only that, but the net didn't even break.

Then it seems to dawn on one of the disciples. Perhaps it was this familiar request. It was about three years earlier. John, his brother James, along with Peter and his brother, Andrew, were out fishing. Had caught nothing. When someone tells them to cast their nets on the other side. They did so. And, much like this morning, they caught a great deal of fish. In fact, they had to call some of the other boats to come and help them haul it in.

When they got to the shore, there was a rabbi. He told them to come and follow Him. That He would make them fishers of men. Yes, that rabbi was Jesus.

Wait! Hold on! Jesus! John turns to Peter and exclaims, "*It is the Lord!*"

It apparently hits Peter hard. He grabs his cloak and jumps into the water and swims to the shore to see his Lord.

This, too, had happened before. Again, on this very sea. Early in the morning, Peter was in the boat with the other disciples. They saw something on the water. As it came closer, they could see it looked like a person. They believed it to be a ghost. I mean, come on, what other explanation could there be for a human outline to be walking toward them ON WATER?

Seeing that it was not a ghost but, instead, it was the Lord, Peter hops over the side and begins to walk toward Jesus. But, due to a lack of faith, he begins to fall in and Jesus grabs him by the hand.

As you can see, today's events bring together a lot from the disciples past with Jesus.

But, the most important thing that is brought together to day is that rock. No, not the fossil, but the rock in this story. The one who, if put back together, would, like the fossil, show the imprint of who created it.

That rock this morning is Peter. That is, after all, what his name means, right? Rock.

If you remember, the night Jesus was betrayed was when the Rock was broken. Peter had followed Jesus as he was carried away from the Garden of Gethsemane by the guards. Peter stood in the courtyard of Pilate's palace. And, it was there that he denied, not once, not twice, but three times, he denied even knowing Jesus.

And, then the rooster crowed. So, it was probably around this same time of day. Only, on this day, instead of hearing the rooster crow, he heard the voice of his Lord crying out, and he jumped in the sea, and swam ashore.

After breakfast, Jesus turns to Peter and asks if Peter loves Him. Peter responds with a, *"Duh! You know I do."*

Jesus tells him, *"Feed my lambs."*

Then a second time, *"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"*

Peter gives the same response. Jesus then says, *"Tend my sheep."*

Then, a third time, *"Do you love me?"*

"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep."

It is with this exchange that Jesus repairs the Rock. And, it once again shows the full imprint of the one who made him.

Peter, who, at the break of day, had denied his Master three times, is now, at the break of day, given the opportunity to affirm his love for his Master three times.

And, Jesus follows up each one with a call for Peter, the Rock, to no longer be just a fisher of men, but a shepherd of His sheep.

And, Peter does just that. He will end up being crucified with his hands outstretched, just as Jesus told him today.

But, here is the thing about Peter. When Peter had denied Christ, Judas had also denied Christ. Both men, had denied and betrayed their Master.

Peter, however, looked to back to Christ as His Savior. Judas did not. Judas believed that he was beyond saving. His guilt and shame turned him inward on himself. He went to the Temple to return the money and to atone for his own sins. The priests laughed at him and mocked him. Feeling lost, Judas hung himself. Dying in his trespasses and sins.

Peter, however, returned to Christ. On Easter morning, he ran to the tomb to see if Jesus was there. Jesus had appeared to Peter and the disciples, twice, now three times.

And, Peter declared his love for his Lord.

Beloved of my God, you are like Peter. You continually run here when you hear the voice of your Master calling. Faithfully, like the disciples this morning, you come here and let your Master feed you.

And, your Lord continually, like he did with Peter, takes your broken pieces and makes you whole again. He forgives your sins. He gives to you peace. He digs you out of

the filth, washes you in your baptism, puts you together, and makes whole the imprint of the one who made and reclaimed you.

You are a bunch of fossils. And, you are being made whole. God be praised!

*Now may the peace that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ
Jesus.*

Amen.



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