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Mennonite Japanese Church in Vancouver

John 21: 1-19

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A dialogue of love with Jesus

Continuing from the last time, this is the story of the resurrected Jesus Christ. Today is a story of love between Peter, who was Jesus' beloved disciple, and Jesus. John's chapter 21 is shining like a diamond that cannot be read without tears in the Bible. Jesus was resurrected and appeared to his disciples three times, but today's text is just the third episode. Jesus did not ascend immediately, but stayed on earth for 40 days, letting his disciples to review the truth that he had taught throughout his public life (Acts 1: 3). It looks like that the day before a mother goes on a trip for a while, she teaches her children about the food in the fridge and tells them to do the laundry with what detergent. Jesus was also worried about his disciples in this way. John 13: 1, "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." He loved his disciples extremely as much as he used to.

Early in the morning on the shores of Lake Tiberias, the disciples went to fishing. The disciples already met the resurrected Jesus twice, but had returned to their previous occupation. I am wondering where their identities were. However, they couldn't catch any fish. Returning to work more than three years away from the working place, it didn't work at all. I think the disciples were at a loss and disappointed. By the way, amazingly Jesus was right there. And He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." Mysteriously, the disciples did not realize that Jesus was there even when they heard the voice of their beloved Jesus. We may not even notice that Jesus is right there next to us like them.

Therefore, the disciples tried to throw the net. Then, they got 153 fish at once! Those who were professional fishermen soon realized that this feat was a miracle. And they soon realized that this must be the work of Jesus. This is because the disciples had experienced the same miracle when they first met Jesus (Luke chapter 5). Peter could not forget this wonderful encounter with Jesus. Peter first jumped into the lake, wearing his coat, because he looked almost naked the moment John said, "Lord!"

He wanted to see his beloved Jesus again! We can suppose that this action shows how much Peter loved Jesus. Peter's love for Jesus hadn't faded.

When Peter went in a hurry, Jesus prepared breakfast by the shore of the lake. And He said, "Come and have breakfast." The moment he saw the bread and fish that Jesus had prepared, Peter remembered Jesus' love and the bread and fish, he shook with tears on his eyes. This bread and fish reminded him of the Passover meal on the night when Jesus was crucified. The sight of Luke's Gospel chapter 22 was in Peter's mind. That deep night, Satan entered his fellow Judas Iscariot, and he went out to betray Jesus. In the sad mood, Jesus gave thanks to God as usual. "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me, and this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Peter was given bread and fish by Jesus and remembered that night. And Jesus, who has risen from the painful death of the cross, was now serving the same meal. Peter would have been impressed and thankful.

Jesus said after the meal was over. "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" To this question, Peter remembered his words, which he confessed to Jesus just on the night before the cross. "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death (Luke 22:33, Matthew 26:35)." Peter said he was ready to die with Jesus very bravely. But now it's just embarrassing. Because Peter said he didn't know Jesus at the time of the suffering of Jesus' cross. He cursed and denied his beloved Jesus even three times at the night.

Peter did not know how to answer Jesus' question. He remembered that he had told me three times before the rooster cried that he denied Jesus, and it became painful to him. "Do I really love Jesus?" He filled his head with embarrassment. But he replied. "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He couldn't say that he loved you in words, as he denied three times. However, he trusted that the Lord had no choice but to know it through his words. And Jesus said, "Feed my lambs" (Psalm 95: 7). Jesus has not touched on anything in Peter's past and his fault. However, he only entrusted Peter to take care of Jesus' beloved lambs. Jesus encouraged Peter's actions, not words. Love cannot be expressed by words alone. Love must be accompanied by action. And this is a faithful and obedient act (Romans 1: 5, 6).

Peter was just quietly listening to Jesus' command. So Jesus said again. "Simon the son of John, do you truly love me?" Peter was confused by this second question. Then,

in an instant, he remembered that night that he denied Jesus in front of one maid (Luke 22:56, 57). This time, Peter replied, fearing that he would be scolded. But he answered it again. "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He just shrugged his shoulders and twirled with the charcoal fire, and he couldn't even see Jesus' face. Here, Jesus also says. "Take care of my sheep." Peter was surprised because Jesus said the same thing. Jesus has entrusted his sheep to Peter twice. Peter wasn't sure if he could really take care of Jesus' lambs. He wondered if he who denied Jesus in order to protect only his own life, could take care of Jesus' sheep. However, at this time, Peter remembered his first encounter with Jesus. That Jesus let him catch a lot of fish when he couldn't catch them. And the resurrected Jesus showed him the same miracle in this morning. Peter has a hope slowly.

'When he first met Jesus, he confessed: "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man! (Luke 5: 8)." I believed at that time that I was a sinner and Jesus was my savior. At that time, Jesus said, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." I still remember. I immediately abandoned the boat, which was my entire fortune, and obeyed Jesus. The first encounter with Jesus at that time is still deeply engraved in my heart (Hebrews 3:14, Revelation 2: 4). Jesus entrusted me with the hope that I, who was only a fisherman at that time, would be used for the precious work of taking humans for the kingdom of God (II Peter 1:10, Romans 8:30, ①).' Peter's faith in Jesus was gradually recovering. II Peter 1:10, Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fail.

Jesus asked for the third time. "Do you love me?" Peter was sad because Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" It was hard for him to remember his failure vividly because he had denied Jesus three times. This stinging word was painful. Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Jesus' words were like a surgical operation to remove Peter's strong ego and all his sins. Peter had to abandon the pride as Jesus' most loved disciple and realized that he was a sinful sinner who could never be proud of himself (Psalm 38: 2-5). Without the awareness as a weak sinner who has denied Jesus three times, he could not know how precious the grace of Jesus' cross is. Jesus wanted Peter's ego to die completely on the cross, forgave his sins, and to know the grace of Jesus' cross. Romans 3:24, "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

This time, Peter answered with tears. "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you," And Jesus said again. "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth. When you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead where you do not want to go." This was a word that showed how Peter would die and glorify God. Jesus prophesied the way of life of Peter. Peter, a sinner, will die completely like how Jesus was crucified and will be resurrected like Jesus. Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Peter has to abandon his righteousness that he is right and live only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Peter heard the words of Jesus and remembered the night before the cross. 'Luke 22:31, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Jesus already knew that he would deny Him three times and prayed to recover from the failure of what he did. (Hebrews 7:24, 25, Rome 8:33- 35). And Jesus still loved him. He also kept the hope that he had for him in the beginning. he sincerely vowed to believe in this love of Jesus, to empower his remaining brothers, and to take care of Jesus' lambs.'

Rome8:33-35, "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died –more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

What happened to Peter's life through this dialogue with Jesus on the shores of Lake Tiberias? After Jesus ascended to heaven, on the day of Pentecost, Peter was transformed into His mighty disciple. And he lived his life as a witness of Jesus' cross and resurrection. Look at Chapter 10 of Acts, you can see that Peter had been preaching the gospel not only to Jews but also to Gentiles by the Holy Spirit's plan. Peter faithfully obeyed God' will. And, as Jesus entrusted, he faithfully took care of the lambs of Jesus. 1 Peter 5: 2-4, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." He encouraged the leaders of the church. I feel his warm heart from this advice. Peter was always aware of Jesus Christ, the Chief

Shepherd who entrusted the lambs three times. And until Peter was martyred and fulfilled his faith (2 Peter 1:14), he was delighted to work hard for the spiritual growth of Jesus' lambs (1 Peter 4:13).

This short but intimate fellowship between Jesus and Peter completely changed Peter's life. He restored his first love with Jesus, renewed his calling, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and was able to live according to God's plan. This special fellowship with Jesus was the source of Peter's fulfillment of his faith by the time he was martyred.

This is a testimony that I heard a long time ago. This person was a dad caring for his daughter with a severe disability. He testified like this. "One day, as I was walking down the hallway, I experienced the presence of God. It was only 10 seconds. Since that day, I had been changing my daughter's diapers every day for 16 years until she went to heaven. I could take care of my daughter with joy because of having just 10 seconds with Jesus." God's presence for only 10 seconds! It is wonderful spiritual experience with God. I pray that we all have such a deep love fellowship with Jesus Christ in our daily life.

But one more thing to focus here is that this fellowship is not always happy. Peter suffered when asked for three times, "Do you love me?" You may have come across painfully piercing words while reading the Bible and praying. Like Peter, we may be told to take care of Jesus' lambs. We may remember our past sins. Conversations with God may point out our weakest part, our sinful nature, and we may feel the pain of being stabbed by a sword (②). In my case, I am always struggling by the word "forgive your enemies". But I would like to continue to take this word seriously. I have to reconcile with my ex-husband and my own father, and sincerely forgive those who have suffered me mentally and financially. How about everyone? Please pray that you all face faithfully in front of God's Words and live in the presence of God every day.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your words today. Jesus is asking us today, "Do you love me?" I pray that by intimate fellowship with Jesus every day, we can walk with the love of Jesus' cross and resurrection. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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