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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
April 12, 2015  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: 1 Peter 1:22-25, Luke 24:13-35

Hymns: 210; 205; 201;51

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 21:15-24

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?"

He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."

He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, 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, "Feed My sheep. 18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

22 Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.”

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?”

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Our Risen Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Jesus’ appearances were with purpose.

As we review the different Easter scriptures we find a record of wondrous joy expressed by the different individuals that benefited from Jesus’ appearances. However we need to notice that these appearances were not by chance, or that Jesus just happened to appear to say “Hi” to some of His friends. It was important that Jesus reveal that He was indeed alive and that this wondrous truth should bring comfort and reassurance to those who believed in Him, lest they despair of their faith in the false conclusion that the Lord was dead and was lost to them forever. So we know that Jesus appeared to the group of who had come out to the tomb and that they rejoiced to see the Lord, but He gave them instructions to tell the disciples that He was alive and would go before them into Galilee, “**as He had told them!**” He was reminding them all that He had told them these things would all happen, that He would die and rise again. There was the purpose in this appearance. So also with the Mary Magdalene He conveyed the important message that He must ascend to His Father in heaven. To the disciples on the road to Emmaus He delivered the message that everything concerning His death and resurrection was in fulfillment of the Scriptures, and they were to look to the Scriptures. In His appearance to the Disciples in the closed room that Easter evening the Savior presented the Keys to the Kingdom, the authority to forgive or retain sins, based on the truth of His resurrection.

What we see in each of these appearances is purpose and power! It was no different with Jesus' appearance on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and we see the purpose of that visit was to restore Peter not only to faith, but to apostleship. From this event we also learn of --

## **THEME: Jesus' Resurrection Power in Our Lives.**

### **I. The Power of Forgiving Grace**

Of course it had been a very special occasion on the shores of the Sea of Galilee with Jesus. They had witnessed the repeated miracle of the great catch of fish. Jesus had prepared a meal for them on the shore, and there simply had to be a great amount of joy among the disciples to share this time with their risen Savior. But maybe it wasn't quite as happy as it might be, at least for one of the disciples. That was of course Peter who had always been the self-proclaimed leader the disciples. He felt very broken by his sin, his failure to own Jesus as his Lord before the world. Jesus' purpose for this resurrection appearance was to minister to Peter, to deal with Peter's sin and the effects of that sin. Peter knew that his sin had been a grievous sin. It had been a sin that showed his weakness, his unworthiness to be counted among the apostles of the Lord. His sin had been shameful! Surely this sin disqualified Peter from apostleship!

Jesus came to deal with such sin. Let us elaborate on that statement by beginning with the greater truth. Jesus came into the world to deal with such sin. He came to bear our sins in His own body on the tree. He died to take our sins away, and He rose again to make it clear to all that this sacrifice was acceptable to God and that He was raised for our justification!

And now let us examine how Jesus applied this gospel truth to Peter. He addressed the sin by digging down to its root cause, Peter's pride. Peter had boasted (and yes, it was boasting) that even if all others denied the Lord, Peter would not. Peter had asserted that he would die with Jesus before he would deny Jesus. It wasn't only Peter that remembered these unfortunate words, but the others present there did as well. It wouldn't do to pretend that all this hadn't happened, that Peter hadn't fallen into sin because of his own pride and spiritual arrogance.

That is why Jesus asked Peter, **“Do you love me more than these?” and Peter answered, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”** However, while Jesus used a word indicating pure love that includes perfect loving behavior, Peter used a word indicating the love between friends. Peter would not, could not bring himself to consider his love that pure and perfect love of which Jesus spoke. Jesus responded positively to Peter’s response saying, **“Feed My Lambs.”**

Jesus asked Peter a second time, **“Do you love Me?”** Persisting in using the same strong word for that pure love which comes to us from our Lord, the love with which He loves us. He focused all the more on that quality of love by asking just **“Do you love Me?”** Again Peter’s answer indicates how he was humbled by his past failing. When Peter replied affirmatively he still would not use that word for Agape love, the pure love with which the Lord loves us.

Jesus went on and asked the third time. And yes, of course it was not a coincidence that Peter who had denied the Lord three times was asked three times concerning his love for the Lord. But this was not done in cruelty. It was done for cleansing. However, this third time Jesus condescended to use the same word that Peter had used, the word of friendship love, and Peter was grieved that Jesus asked this third time, but there it was open and laid bare. The sin would no longer fester, for Jesus directed Peter for a third time to feed His little sheep for Him.

This was not about embarrassing Peter but about restoring him, not only to discipleship, but first to faith and the assurance of forgiveness. This is the power of the resurrection as it is applied to an individual sinner. And yes, that was the purpose of this visit; Jesus was calling this sinner to repentance. It was not that Peter needed to have his guilt and shame pointed out. What Peter needed was the confidence that the Lord received Peter in His forgiving grace.

This is the power of the resurrection that comes to us also. Sin is not only present in our lives that we are guilty of sin; so many of our sins are shameful. We become victim of our own sins and the shame that burdens our hearts, for we also know that we are not worthy of Jesus’ love and forgiveness. Our own love for Jesus has

been shown to be weak and inferior, not at all like His sacrificial love for us!

Jesus calls us out. Jesus comes to us through His Word. Jesus doesn't want us to be harboring shame in our hearts, but rather the grace of forgiveness that He brings into the world as our Risen Savior! One of our hymn writers put the lesson quite well:

**TLH 324:1** Jesus sinners doth receive! Oh, may all this saying ponder  
Who in sin's delusion live And from God and heaven wander!  
Here is hope for all who grieve, Jesus sinners doth receive!"

Jesus takes our sins away. By the power of our Risen and Living Lord we are restored to the family of God. God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself. He has brought this truth to you that you might understand that you are now called into the household of God as His child and an heir of everlasting life.

If there is any problem with this the problem is not with God and His forgiveness, but rather with the weakness of our faith. The Apostle John, who was present with Jesus and Peter both at Peter's denial and Peter's restoration to grace, wrote these words in his first epistle.

**1 John 3:19-21** And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. 20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

If we continue to struggle with feelings of shame in our hearts then know that God is greater than our heart for He has cleansed us of all sin. If our hearts are relieved of guilt and shame, we have confidence in the forgiving grace of God.

The power of the Jesus' resurrection didn't stop with cleansing Peter of guilt and shame and restoring him to grace. We see here also --

## **II. The Power of Jesus' Purpose in Life for Peter.**

Just as Jesus had asked Peter three times about Peter's love for the Lord, Jesus also asserted three times that He still had a role, a calling for Peter to fulfill in Peter's life. He told Peter, "Feed my lambs," and then "Shepherd my little sheep," and then again the third time, "Feed my little sheep." This wasn't a matter of downplaying the serious nature of Peter's sin and telling Peter that it didn't really matter after all. No, that wasn't it at all. This is all about the greatness of the saving power of our Risen Lord in restoring the sinner and raising us up together with the Lord! Jesus calls us to faith and to a higher calling as His disciples.

For Peter it was a calling that he was to serve as one of the Apostles in tending the flock of the Lord. He was to feed them in the pastures of God's Word. He was to care for them with the gospel of Jesus' love and forgiveness. Peter was to care for those who were tender and easily victimized by the devil and this sinful world. It all comes down to bringing them the peace of forgiveness which Jesus had secured. Jesus entrusted that message to His disciples. They were to bring the Word of forgiving grace to sinners in the world, and assure and then reassure those who are troubled by sin of the grace of God that comes to us in Jesus' death and resurrection.

This power of the resurrection comes to us as well. Jesus has entrusted us with His purpose for life. Peter himself encourages us in comprehending the purpose the Lord has given us for lives. He writes in his first epistle:

**1 Peter 2:9-10** "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

No, we have not been given the same calling as Peter, none of us has, not even pastors. And yes, we have other responsibilities that keep our lives pretty busy, but they are not our highest calling, and they do not and indeed dare not preclude us from fulfilling that calling. Our calling is to be a part of daily life no matter what activity fills our day. In all the activities of life we are to be proclaiming the praises of Jesus who saved us from the darkness of sin and death. We are to be showing His glory to others that they

also might find the path to life. This is our calling, and it is empowered by Jesus' resurrection.

But there was still more that the Lord had to say to Peter. He needed to reassure Peter about his failing to be willing to die with the Lord. Peter didn't possess the power to change that, but by the Lord's Resurrection one may be granted --

### **III. The Power to Be Faithful Unto Death.**

Peter was told that the day would come when he was old that people would take him where he did not want to go, and stretch out his hands, and in his death Peter would glorify the Lord. Tradition maintains that Peter was crucified in an upside down position. He gave his life for the Lord. Peter wasn't to be concerned about what would happen with others, and what persecution they might encounter in their lives. He was to seek power from the Lord for Peter to live and die for the Lord. And the Lord gave Peter the strength to bear the evil day.

The specter of persecution is difficult to think about. We are living in a time when persecution against Christians is as severe as it has ever been, ever since the days of the apostles and the persecutions of the first and third century. In the last three years millions of Christians have lost their worldly possessions because of their faith. Many thousands have died, being brutally murdered, crucified, stoned, burned, beheaded. Public policy in some countries with Christian minorities has been altered to encourage such persecution.

It scares me. It makes me wonder if I would have the strength of faith to face such a death rather than speak a few words of denial. Is it so bad for one to speak a few words of denial rather than to suffer death?! **Yes!** For "whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it"(Luke 9:24). But how can I be expected to endure unto the end? **By comprehending the power of Jesus' resurrection!**

There is no other way than to know and believe that Jesus is our living Lord and He brings us eternal life. His Word, His WORD assures us and empowers us. Jesus promises us –

**John 10:28-30** And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. 30 I and My Father are one."

No one can snatch us out of the Lord's hand. WE SHALL NOT PERISH! Paul's words at the end of Romans chapter eight are words we often read in connection with many difficulties in this life, but they are most important to understand in this context of enduring persecution and even death for the Jesus' sake.

**Romans 8:35-39** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yes, we may be counted as sheep for the slaughter, but nothing, not evil words, not mean rants, not sword or even fire can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus, our crucified and Risen and ever-living Lord!

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.