

Mid-Week Meditation - April 22

Scripture Reference: John 21:1-17, Matthew 28:16-20

Last week our meditation was about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We talked about the place that is thought to be the location of Jesus crucifixion and His resurrection and how the history of this church adds authority and witnesses powerfully to the glory of our Savior's death and resurrection narratives found in the gospels. In those gospel narratives Jesus tells his disciples to go ahead of him to Galilee. So today, I want to talk a little bit about what happened in the area of Galilee after Jesus rose from the dead. Presumably, Jesus was in Jerusalem for at least a week, because it says in the account of the gospel of John that Jesus appeared to his disciples one week later. The amount of time between that meeting, when Thomas finally realized that Jesus was alive, and when he appeared for the third time in the area of the Galilee is not clear. But it certainly was within several weeks of his resurrection, since the master commanded them to go ahead of him to Galilee. The third time Jesus met with at least some of his disciples was along the shores of the sea of Galilee. This account of Jesus' appearance is found in John 21. It is a story where a number of Jesus' disciples decide to go fishing. They fished all night long and did not catch anything. Just as the sun was just getting ready to rise, the disciples saw a man standing on the shore. It was Jesus, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. The man on the shore told them cast their nets on the right side of the boat and there, they would find some fish. And when they did, they caught more fish than they could haul in without ripping their nets. Then John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." And Peter rushed to the shore, and the others all followed. When they got there, Jesus was sitting by the fire and he invited them to breakfast. And they shared bread and fish. I believe that this account is showing the disciples, and us, that the risen presence of the Lord will be with people always, even at a time in life as common as eating breakfast.

After breakfast, Peter and Jesus walked along the shore of the sea of Galilee and had a talk. Imagine what it must have been like to walk along seashore with the risen Lord. Especially with the awkward truth that was still seated deep inside Peter's heart. Peter had betrayed Jesus in his darkest hour. When the rooster crowed, Peter's betrayal was laid wide open for all to see. Even though Jesus was

raised from death, and there was so much reason for hope and joy, the stark fact still remained. When a situation came before Peter that called for allegiance to Jesus, Peter's words were, "I don't even know the man." So how in the world can Peter be the Rock upon which Jesus would build his church, when he crumbled so easily when the going got tough. Peter must have felt guilty. He probably wanted to apologize, but he was ashamed that he had been so weak when he was called on most, to be strong. Jesus asked Peter "Do you love me?" three times. In Peter's mind, Jesus was calling Peter's love for him into question. So, Peter was hurt. But the master was simply pointing out the mistake that Peter had made when he betrayed Jesus. Peter was depending on his own strength and not the Lord's. Peter was depending on his own wisdom, rather than trusting in the things that the master had told him would happen. Eventually, because of this walk along the seashore, and the miracle of Jesus' risen presence standing before him, Peter, not only learned that he was forgiven for his betrayal, but that when he betrayed Jesus, he was trusting in the wisdom of people and not the wisdom of the Lord. He learned during that sea shore moment, that the things of God were way more important than the things of people. The risen presence of God standing before him made the weakness of his betrayal seem less important, and the need to feed His sheep with the love of God way more important. I believe that Peter came to know that he would make mistakes in his journey, but as long as the love of the Lord was in his heart, even human fears and frailty, and weakness can work out for God's glory, as long as love was inside his heart. In other words, showing love toward the sheep of his flock was the greatest demonstration of God's love in spite of any mistakes, or weakness one might demonstrate in the process.



Now I want to show you a church that commemorates this gospel narrative. It is called the church of St Peter's Premicy and it is located in a place called Tahbah on the Northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Our tour group visited this church. Visiting this church, it is easy to envision the Sea Shore breakfast and the walk along the sea shore that Peter and Jesus took. Here is a picture of the inside of the church. You can imagine the disciples sitting on different places on this rock and sharing this simple breakfast with the Lord



And here is the beach in front of the church which is said to be the stretch of beach where this reckoning between Peter and Jesus took place.



The next time that Jesus appeared before his followers was up on top of a high mountain. In the Gospel of Matthew it says that the eleven disciples went to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. And when they saw him, they worshipped him.



It is believed that the Great Commission happened on top of Mt. Arbel. From the top of this high mountain, you can see where all of the important things that they had experienced together with Jesus in Galilee happened. You could see

Capernaum, Magdala, the home town of Mary Magdalene, the site of the Sermon on the Mount, several places where Jesus had fed the multitudes, where Jesus calmed the storm, and walked on water. Where Jesus had healed the sick, raise people from the dead, and cast out demons. If you use your binoculars, you can even see the Church of St. Peter's Primacy. All of the places where these things had happened were clearly visible on the landscape below them. In that context, remembering the miracle of Jesus ministry which had transformed every one of their lives, came these words. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, Therefore, go and make disciples of all of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the close of the age. All authority in heaven and on earth truly belongs to Jesus. He had the authority to empower Peter's discipleship. He had the authority to empower the ministry of his disciples to spread the word of God and his Son Jesus Christ in a way that would endure for all generations including our own. In your life and in Mine, All authority in heaven and on earth has indeed been given to our savior Jesus Christ. It is indeed our call to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in name of the Father Son and the Holy Spirit. It is indeed our call to do our best to teach all of those around us to obey all that our Lord has commanded us. But most of all, Surely God, and his Son are with all of us, even to the very end of the age.

Let us Pray