



May

Breakfast on the beach

This is a beautiful post resurrection story. Some of the disciples went fishing, fished all night but caught nothing. And then they saw someone on the shore who told them to cast their nets on the other side of their boat. They did and caught 153 fish - apparently that was a lot! It has been called a miraculous catch. Why 153? Is there any significance in that number and which disciple took the time to count them? Peter immediately recognised the stranger as his Lord and jumped out of the boat and rushed to shore. They had breakfast on the beach together which Jesus had started to cook on a charcoal fire. It is a comforting sort of story up to this point, being cared for by their friend who was also their master, the Lord Jesus.

Then it gets a bit uncomfortable. At the 'last supper' on the evening before Jesus is arrested, Jesus told Peter that he would deny him 3 times before the cock crowed. And indeed, 3 times Peter denied Jesus that night during his trial and at least one of these times was around a charcoal fire. How ashamed and full of grief Peter must have felt at the realisation of his failure and betrayal. And now Peter has to face up to it and through this uneasy and painful (for Peter) conversation Jesus restores and reinstates Peter. Peter sees he is not only forgiven but set a challenge which also bears responsibility. Jesus tells him to "feed and care for my sheep". A shepherd looks after his flock of sheep even at risk to his life. That was what Jesus was challenging Peter to do. He is to go and continue the work Jesus began in his ministry on earth. The picture of the shepherd is the picture of Jesus looking after us, his followers, his sheep. Now it was up to Peter and he became the leader of the church and did die for his faith.

That is what is so truly amazing about the forgiveness and grace of Jesus. We are not written off or ever seen as lesser beings because of our failings. Peter confronted his mistake with Jesus as we must do and that is painful but Jesus forgives us and restores us and we are able to carry on with our heads held high.

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