

**“A Moment of Anger. A Lifetime of Favor.”**

**Psalm 30; John 21:1-19** *The Message*

**New London UMC**

**May 1-2, 2022**

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In the New Testament, aside from his breaking bread (that someone else baked), and blessing fish (that someone else had prepared), we never really hear that Jesus actually cooked food for anyone before this breakfast on the shore. Do you think Jesus might have decided to take up cooking after his resurrection as a way to fill in the time between his appearances with the disciples? Or had Jesus always enjoyed cooking outdoors over an open fire? If we consider how many times Jesus and his disciples might have found themselves still walking between villages and needing to camp out overnight; then how many mornings had they gathered around a fire to eat breakfast? Was this the kind of gathering time when Jesus would talk to his disciples before they set off for the day? Was this breakfast together with Jesus as familiar to the disciples as their going out on the water and spending the night fishing? . . . We just don't know, do we?

I also wonder why Simon Peter felt compelled to waste no time in pulling himself together and getting to shore to be with Jesus. Although he wasn't the first disciple to recognize or determine that it was Jesus on the shore, he was motivated to be the first disciple to reach Jesus. Why? If this appearance of the resurrected Jesus occurred AFTER he appeared TWICE to the disciples in a locked house, then this was at least the THIRD time that Simon Peter had seen Jesus. And when Jesus appeared at the house he didn't mention *anything* about Simon Peter having denied knowing Jesus three times on the night that Jesus was arrested. So was Simon Peter still feeling guilty about that? Did Simon Peter want Jesus to see that despite those denials, Simon Peter was now making every effort to be there for him? Or was Simon Peter just acting like a puppy who loves his Master SO much he has to run to him whenever he sees him? . . . We don't know.

But what rattles around in my mind is verse five from Psalm 30. It seems to flow into the major undercurrents of the relationship between Simon Peter and Jesus that morning:

*Surely the Lord's anger is but for a moment; the Lord's favor is for a lifetime.*

*Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. -Psalm 30:5 NRSV*

Was Jesus angry with Simon Peter? Is that why Jesus asked him three times if he loved Jesus? Or was Simon Peter angry with Jesus for repeatedly asking him about something that he thought Jesus should ALREADY KNOW, or that he *hoped* Jesus still knew? Or was the love between Jesus and Simon Peter far greater than any minor flare up of anger? Did their conversation mark a re-set point in their relationship? A time to say what is past is past, but from here on out Simon Peter would love and follow Jesus by loving, feeding, and shepherding Jesus' followers as Jesus had loved, fed, and shepherded them? It seems

to me that Simon Peter truly worked at answering the question, “Do you love me?” in all that he would DO for the rest of his life.

But how do **we** answer Jesus’ question, “Do you love me?” How DO we love Jesus? What do we DO to express our love for Jesus? How do we feed and shepherd Jesus’ lambs? How do we care for all who are vulnerable, lost, and suffering? It is a big flock. It is a big commitment to “do” Jesus love.

I think it is safe to say that everyone’s mental health has either declined or been seriously challenged since the start of the pandemic. But what have we done to reduce the stigma, create empathy, and encourage healthy conversations about mental illness? Yes, we provide space in our church building for Samaritan Counseling. But how do we advocate for and aide someone in need of mental healthcare? Are we educating ourselves about how to start a conversation that expresses our concern for someone’s mental health? Do we know what resources are available if someone asks us for help? In what ways can we be present with people who feel isolated? Or spread hope to someone who feels hopeless?

It is also no secret that many people are feeling stressed as we experience the highest rate of inflation in decades. If someone’s income has stayed the same for the last two or more years, it has effectively and significantly *decreased* in buying power because of the rate of inflation. More and more households are asking the question, “Which bill gets paid first?” That is soon followed by the question, “What’s not going to be paid?” What do we need to be doing beyond how we currently support the Community Cupboard and Mission of Hope House to feed and shelter Jesus’ lambs?

Report after report details how humanity is rushing headlong into making the earth uninhabitable. That implies that we haven’t loved the earth and all of God’s creatures as Jesus has loved us. Can we love Jesus and each other by reducing the amount of garbage we generate each week? By shutting off lights that don’t need to be on, or unplugging electrical devices we’re not using? Have we considered limiting the number of times we drive our vehicles each week, or the total number of miles we drive in a month? Do we take the rivers and marshes around us for granted, or do we help to take care of them? How is our love for Jesus evident in how we choose to live in our environment?

We are surrounded by countless opportunities to love Jesus because we can express our love for Jesus by helping to feed and shepherd Jesus’ lambs in so many ways. But we continue to be accountable for what EXACTLY we are going to DO to deepen our love, and to draw closer to Jesus, as we follow him TODAY, and tomorrow, and each day for the rest of our lives. Because Jesus keeps asking, “Do you love me?”

Amen.