

What does it mean to share special times together over food? How many times in life do we celebrate with food? I mean most of the big events in life contain a meal of some kind. We celebrate birth, and death with some sort of meal, and then almost everything in between with one. Sharing food with those we love, is an essential part of who we are. Getting together to eat is one of the times, maybe actually 'THE' time, when we choose to be together. Even here, as a worshipping community here, we centralise all of our worship and time together over eating. First with holy communion at the altar, and then with a cuppa and communion as a community. The social aspect of being together over food, speaks to the heart of who we are, and it has its origins and power in the communal sharing of food. Jesus knew this.

Today we have breakfast on the beach, nothing more simple than sharing breakfast with those you love. But this breakfast is where we enter more fully into the Easter story; further into the work of resurrection. And as we try and work out what it means to have Resurrection set loose in the world, in the church, and in our lives, we might wonder why we still at times feel so empty. If God has fulfilled the promises of the world, why does it feel as though nothing has really changed? Even in 2019. I mean, we have the same politicians, promising the same stuff, we have our lives, our families, our work

and leisure promising the same old, same old. So what has changed for you, since Easter or because of it?

One of the oddest experiences of Easter is that it can still feel a little empty, even after the graphic realities of Holy Week: bread broken, feet washed, thorns pressed into skin, crosses raised, and a body laid in a new grave. It could be said that Easter is about absence rather than presence: the body is no longer in the tomb; and we are left to work out what that means for us, just as the disciples did. But more than anything else, Easter is about resorption. Today's story makes that clear; Resurrection life is a restoration, of relationships, of deep forgiveness, of community and of food.

As we enter the story today, we might be wondering why Peter and some of the others are back in their fishing boats. It's a little confusing to us, that they could go through all this stuff. Three years of following Jesus, being his closest friends, his disciples, being, right in the middle of it all. Of healing, feeding, abundance, love, grace, truth, as well as crucifixion, betrayal, bereavement and desolation; and what, they're not changed by it'; they just simply go back to fishing. It can leave us scratching our heads and asking, What the? But what have to remember here, that Peter is actually us. Peter is the quintessential human and represents humanity; us, and Peter represents how we behave in the face of tragedy and despair.

Remember at this stage, Peter still has no idea about what to come, amidst grief, he's still trying to figure it out. Just image what that would have been like for him? It's not really surprising that he needs a modicum of normal and familiar and decided to go fishing. I think, if my life was this topsy-turvey, I retreat into the familiar and normal too, I think we all would.

So, Peter returns to what he knows. But even that's not working for him. I mean, he catches nothing. Seems as though there is to be no solace even in this familiar activity. Will life ever be the same again for poor Peter and his disciples? On top of his grief, and his sense of having failed Jesus, he is now confronted with failing at something he has done all his life.

But as the dawn breaks, the disciples see a man on the beach standing over a small cooking fire. The stranger calls out to them and suggests something very odd: 'cast your nets on the other side of the boat, he shouts across the water'. Surprisingly, they comply – and suddenly the net is full to bursting with fish!

Suddenly Peter realises that he has seen something like this before: on a hillside, with thousands of people being fed, at a wedding in Cana, when gallons of water became wine. And suddenly as the beloved disciple yells, "It

is the Lord!” Peter knows it too, and abandons the boat and makes his way back to God.

Jesus does what he’s always done, he shares food with them. Over a meal they resume their relationship, as if nothing had ever happened. This gathering over food; this breakfast, provides a nice conclusion to that other meal they shared, the Last Supper. It changes the trajectory, from grief and confusion, to purpose and mission. Everything Jesus said to the disciples before his crucifixion, is coming to bear on the disciples, and their purpose.

But first, Jesus has some very specific business with Peter, ‘us’. Remember when the gospel story focuses on Peter, it’s fair to say, we are included. In fact, its telling us to sit up and take notice.

Before Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, Jesus tells Peter that he will deny him, and sadly, his prediction comes true. Peter repeatedly denies knowing Jesus. He is absent at the crucifixion. He is among the disciples who meet behind locked doors out of fear. But this story is not about dragging up past failures, its about forgiveness and reconcilliaton. Now Jesus speaks directly to the miscreant, Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” ‘yes Lord’ Peter says, ‘you know that I do!’ ‘Feed my sheep’ Jesus says.

“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” ‘yes Lord’ Peter says, ‘you know that I do!’ And a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” ‘yes Lord’ Peter says, ‘you know everything, you know I love you.’ And Jesus tells him, ‘tend my flock’; ‘tend my little flock that is a bit lost’. ‘Tend my flock that thinks its lost its shepherd through death’. Peter and subsequently us, don’t even realise that God’s real presence through the resurrection is about to be more real than real, and more true than true. Through forgiveness and reconciliation.

Peter is given the opportunity to undo his denial, his rejection of love and the truth and affirm it instead. He is given three opportunities to affirm instead of deny. Through Jesus, the word, the Logos, “full and lasting forgiveness” is enacted and realised. Jesus knows the absolute worst things about us and he forgives us anyway. And to boot, we are given the responsibility of the flock to tend. Its not just warm and fuzzies with personal, or individual salvation, its kingdom stuff. The Jesus movement needed Peter, and it needs us to perpetuate and move it, back towards God. And forgiveness is the key. Without forgiveness, there is no hope for us. Forgiveness is the key to happiness, to contentment, to life in its truest most true sense. Peter, the impetuous, Peter the big-mouthed disciple, Peter the one who gave in to fear, and failed to acknowledge Jesus, Peter who failed to stick around for the bitter end, thoroughly human Peter, is now given the opportunity to face his risen Lord and begin again. And, so are we.

This story offers some of the deepest implications of Resurrection for us in 2019: in that, 'WE' are forgiven. We are invited to start over. We are completely loved and forgiven. This isn't only Peter's story; it's our story, too.

When fear holds us back, love calls us forward. When we feel trapped by familiarity and the way things have always been, Jesus invites us to cast our nets on the other side – to change our perspective. In the light of the Resurrection, this is not only possible, its a requirement.

How are you Peter?

How are you forgiven but don't know it, or cant recognise it? How are you held back from the abundant life Jesus promises? If you truly understood yourself to be completely forgiven, completely loved, and completely free, how might that change the choices you make about work, money, relationships?

The implications of this story resonate, not just within our individual selves, but also within our faith communities. How do we make choices about who we are and what we are doing, or even why we are doing it? Are we making our choices based on money, or on fear of failure? Or are we making decisions in the light of this glorious resurrection? If we are called to proclaim God's love, known to us in Jesus, then are we not also called to act on it.

That means setting aside fear, and the way fear binds us into small lives; and embracing love as the basis of every action we undertake.

God's love, set loose in the world in the Resurrection, needs our hands and feet and hearts to make it concrete in our place and time. Like Peter, we're invited to change our perspective, and cast our nets where the love of God is available and of course, there's plenty for everyone.

Jesus invites us: Come and have breakfast.

In the light of Resurrection, there is no room for guilt and fear. We are forgiven, loved, and free, and we have some sheep to find and care for.

Amen.