

Hinde Street Methodist Church

Sunday 5th May 2019 10am

Revd Val Reid

John 21: 1-19

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Sermon

On Thursday this week, Co-op Funeral Care released their 2019 funeral music top ten.

Topping the charts, as it has nearly every year, was Frank Sinatra singing 'My Way.'

For the first time ever, there are no hymns in the top ten – 'Abide with me' and 'The Lord's my Shepherd' have been edged out by Westlife and Ed Sheeran.

And now, the end is near - And so I face the final curtain

My friend, I'll say it clear - I'll state my case, of which I'm certain

I've lived a life that's full - I've travelled each and every highway

And more, much more than this - I did it my way

I wonder whether that's the philosophy of Peter and the rest of the disciples?
I did it my way.

Their stories began with fishing.

With a solid community, a job that supports them and their families, a limited but satisfying life.

It moves to a call to follow a charismatic preacher and teacher.

To an enthusiastic putting down of their nets.

A life on the road.

Three years of challenge, of moving well outside their comfort zones, of going with Jesus – so many times – to the other side.

Three years of asking questions, of failing to understand the answers.

And then the final showdown – the arrest, torture and death of their friend and leader.

Their various betrayals.

Some dramatic – Judas selling his friend for thirty pieces of silver.

Some heart-breaking – Peter denying that he knows the one person who he believes has the words of eternal life.

Some mundane – the disciples who fell asleep in the garden, who ran away from the soldiers, who didn't have the courage to stand at the foot of the cross.

And now, here they are, back in Galilee, back to fishing.

Their old home.

Their old jobs.

They've had an awfully big adventure, but now everything is back to normal.

Big sigh of relief.

Part of me always thinks, when I read and re-read this story – what were they avoiding?

In John chapter 20, Jesus appears to them, though the doors of the house were locked.

He shows them his wounds.

He offers them his peace.

He breathes the Holy Spirit into them.

He even comes back a week later, because Thomas missed that first occasion.

John tells us that:

Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book.

And yet, here they all are, back in Galilee.

Going fishing, as though mission, death and resurrection had never happened.

I can identify with that.

I wish I couldn't.

But I can.

We all get a bit carried away, sometimes.

Head in the clouds.

And then we have to come back to earth.

But Jesus is waiting for them on the beach.

And he offers them a masterclass in doing it differently.
Not *My Way* – but *My Way*.

And what does His way look like?

Cast the net to the other side of the boat.

Experienced fishermen – I can imagine how irritated they were when this stranger thought he knew the lake better than they did.

But – amazingly – they couldn't haul in the nets because there were so many fish.

Come and have breakfast.

Jesus already has fish on the BBQ, and bread – but he asks them to bring some of the fish they have caught to share in the feast.

This is communion.

Whenever you sit and have a meal together, whenever you share the food you have with each other, whenever you create community around a table or on a beach – remember me.

And for Peter, a masterclass in God's way.

Three times you denied that you knew me.

Three times you affirm that you love me.

No need to be humiliated.

Not need to be proud.

You are who you are – a flawed human being who made – and will make – many mistakes.

But still loved by God.

And still with a task to do.

Feed others, as you have been fed.

Whether 'My Way' is about our need for self-sufficiency...

Or whether it's about sticking to our tried and tested paths for fear of taking risks...

Whether it's about labelling ourselves failures...

Or whether it's about being proud of our choices, good and bad alike...

God says no – *My Way* is quite different.

Here – in the middle of ordinary daily work.

In the middle of community meals.

In the middle of shame at our inadequacy.

Jesus offers a new way to engage with life, with each other, with God.

When I look around our world, I recognise how much we need this invitation.

Think about this last week.

Greta Thunberg has challenged us to live differently to save the planet.

This involves giving up *My Way* – my self-indulgence; my easy, plastic-dependent shopping habits; my wasteful use of energy; my hopping on a plane for a holiday on the other side of the world.

That's hard.

It's not the way we have been used to.

For some this schoolgirl is a saint.

For others, who find her message too difficult, she is at best naïve, at worst a narcissist.

But John's gospel story reminds us that there is another way.

A way that is not about my own narcissism.

My own inadequacy.

My own stubborn independence.

It's about pausing, here and now, wherever we are, and recognising that the boundaries of my world could be a bit wider.

And when I widen my perspective, I am capable of changing how I live.

I can choose to do life differently.

Not My Way.

But God's Way.

Amen.