

## Focusing In . . . May 09

*Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. (John 21: 17)*

As I have continued my walk with Peter through to the resurrection, this moment in the gospel of John between the risen Christ and Peter grabs me as such a beautiful, caring picture of two friends. Perhaps referring to Jesus as a friend seems trite, but I mean it with the deepest reverence and sincerity for there is such intimacy and tenderness in this encounter.

Even though the disciples have seen the Lord – they have touched his side, heard his voice, felt his breath on their face - they do not know what to do. With a mixture of joy and confusion, they go back to the one thing that they know well – they go fishing. Jesus seems always willing to meet us where we are, and so around the breakfast fire, he once again breaks the loaves and fishes and feeds those hungry for much more than bread, but for some sense of purpose and meaning. In this context comes the beautiful conversation that Jesus initiates with the one who had recently denied even knowing him. “Simon, Son of John, do you love me more than these?” Notice that Peter is not “the Rock” any more – he’s simply his father’s son.

But this Simon is finally a completely open and vulnerable soul. He is still impetuous as he jumps into the water and swims to his Lord, but it is a different man who comes to Jesus than the one who once endeavored to walk on water. All the bravado is gone, all the brilliant theological statements and declarations of faithfulness. There is nothing left to pretend, nothing to hide. Peter knows that it matters little what he declares with his lips because they have lied before, and not just regarding what he believed about Jesus as Messiah, but also what he believed to be true about his own self. If Peter did not understand Jesus, even more, he did not understand himself.

And so, after Jesus asks three times about Peter’s love for him, Peter responds with all honesty, “Lord, you know everything . . .” Think how often Peter had questioned Jesus or tried to argue with him or rebuke him. There is none of that now. No arguing, no trying to convince himself or anyone else – he simply lays open heart for the scrutiny of his Lord. “You know what is in my heart. You know that I love you.”

Jesus will also reveal the true color of our own hearts when we quit justifying our beliefs or actions; when we quit trying to prove our loyalty or faithfulness; when we take off the masks of togetherness and reveal the ache of brokenness; when we stop offering the wordy, flowery prayers or spouting theological dogma at each other. Take time to read I John 3: 16 – 24: *This then is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence . . . for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. (vs. 19-20).*