

Peter Restored

Key Verse: “*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*”
—John 21:15

Selected Scriptures: John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-17

Following his resurrection, and for a period of forty days, Christ was ever present, although only intermittently visible to his disciples. During that time, he gave assurances to his followers that he was risen, strengthened their faith, and provided them instructions concerning their roles after his ascension. One of these occasions took place at the “sea of Tiberias,” or sea of Galilee.—John 21:1

As part of today’s lesson, the disciples experienced a miraculous catch of fish after Jesus gave them instructions to cast their net on the right side of the boat. They initially failed to recognize our Lord standing on the shore. Then, John—“that disciple whom Jesus loved”—realized that the stranger standing there was the risen Lord and proclaimed his conviction to Peter.—vss. 3-6

Peter, a man of action, and doubtless still suffering at heart from his earlier denial of Christ, plunged into the sea and swam ashore, but evidently was timid when he reached land. He did not go directly to Jesus but waited and helped to pull the net full of fish to the shore. When

the boat had landed and things were made fast and safe, it was noticed that the stranger had a fire of coals and fish thereon and invited the weary ones to “come and dine” with him.—vss. 7-12

In the first of three similar inquires, our Key Verse records that Jesus asked Peter whether he loved him more than the fishing business. Jesus then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”—vss. 16,17

In thinking about Peter, we are reminded he said that though all should forsake Jesus, he would not do such a thing. How it must have pierced his heart when he heard the cock crow as the Master predicted, for he denied his Lord three times, with cursing coming from his mouth. (Matt. 26:69-75) This is a powerful lesson concerning our own human frailties and the need to extend mercy to one another. In this appearance on the shores of the sea of Galilee it seems likely that during his discussion with Peter, Jesus was, in effect, reassuring him. In doing so, the Master showed that he had confidence that Peter would exercise care in the future and continue to lay his all on the altar of sacrifice to the end of his course after being reinstated as a worthy servant of his Lord.

Our full appreciation of this matter should surely lead us to have a heart that is conformed to our Heavenly Father. Not only will we seek to be just, righteous, and pure in what we do, but also desire to be merciful towards others because, like ourselves, they also experience difficulties. —Ps. 136:1-26 ■