

Resurrection: The Promise of Restoration

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Text: John 21:1-19

Think for a moment about your relationship with the most important person in your life - spouse, parent, child, sibling, "significant other," whoever that may be. The very thought of that person is likely to produce an emotional response, right? I hope it is good, warm, comforting, or maybe it is hot, exciting, even bubbly. It may also bring other feelings not so pleasant - sorrow, hurt, pain, anger, heartache. It is likely that there is some of each in that relationship. Hopefully there are wonderful feelings attached to many pleasant memories. And, probably some scars left by hurts, both ours and the other persons. You know what I am talking about - we all have them, but we won't mention them.

Have you noticed that one little hurt can tarnish the memory of a hundred pleasant ones? If we are not careful, we may judge our relationship with that person solely on the tone of our last conversation, be it pleasant or painful. Most of you here are mature, not so much in years, but you know that the value of your relationship is **much** greater than a few hurtful words or actions. In any relationship there are experiences, foibles, mistakes, and thoughtless remarks. But, when we value that person and our relationship, aren't they worth the effort to **reconcile** and **restore** it?

Without forgiveness is it possible to maintain a close relationship...even if they don't ask for it.

You may have heard this beautiful story posted at a Billy Graham Crusade a number of years ago.

In the country of Spain a father and his son's relationship had become strained, so that the son ran away from home. His father, however, began a search for his rebellious son traveling far and wide. Finally, in desperation, he put this ad in the newspaper: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon tomorrow. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father."

The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office 800 'Paco's' showed up. They were all seeking love from their fathers, restoration of that important relationship.

The world must be full of hurting people yearning for forgiveness, love and acceptance of a significant person in their lives. And, for some it is so hard to offer or accept. The only way to restoration is

FORGIVENESS.

Kathy Kane Hansen wrote a wonderful article in 1971 called "**I Have Learned**" that has been circulated in print and on the internet every sense (used with permission by the author):

- *I've learned – that you cannot make someone love you. All you can do is be someone who can be loved. The rest is up to them.*
- *I've learned – that it takes years to build up trust, and only seconds to destroy it.*
- *I've learned – that we are responsible for what we do, no matter how we feel.*
- *I've learned – that learning to forgive takes practice.*
- *I've learned – that there are people who love you dearly, but just don't know how to show it.*

- *I've learned – that no matter how good a friend is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while and you must forgive them for that.*

Kathy Hansen was a young adult when she wrote that – amazingly insightful for someone of that age.

I believe that Jesus' resurrection opens the door of **our** tomb offering us the opportunity for **FORGIVENESS** and **RESTORATION** of the relationship God intended from us in the beginning. The story in our scripture text today is a beautiful example of God's love as Jesus seeks to restore his relationship with Simon Peter.

Along the shore of the Sea of Tiberius or Galilee as it is known, dawn begins to break in rich tones over the eastern mountains. After a long and fruitless night of fishing, the tired fishermen are beginning to realize that it has been three years since they did that for a living. They had been following Jesus fishing for different kind of fish, the two-legged kind, people. They hear a voice call out from the shore, "Have you caught anything?" Perhaps they felt a bit of *deja vu*, something familiar about that voice and the setting? "Try the other side of the boat," again the voice echoes across the water. They try the other side one more time, and what happens next must have been as shocking as the first time it happened, a huge haul of large fish that should have burst the net – 153 in all, but it held. (The number 153 may represent all the varieties of fish in the lake. The net symbolizes the church that holds all peoples.) John said, "It's Jesus," so Simon Peter grabbed his clothes and dove in to be the first one to shore to greet him. Peter had unfinished business.

You might like to close your eyes to get a picture in your mind of Jesus taking Simon Peter by the shoulder and leading him down the shore for a stroll. Then Jesus turned and asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Can you see Jesus motion at the boat, the lake, the fisherman's way of life and perhaps his friends? He was saying, "Peter, do you love me enough to give up all this, your friends and family to follow me to shepherd my people." Peter replies, "Yes, Lord; you know that I do love you." Jesus knew that. For each of Peter's three denials, Jesus offered him forgiveness and the opportunity for restoration of their relationship, made even sweeter by his grace.

There where tradition holds this beautiful encounter took place is a church on the edge of the water. Beside it heart-shaped stones lead out into the water depicting Jesus love for Peter and Peter's love reaffirmed. Is there some unresolved business between you and Jesus? Have you failed him or another? Is your relationship broken? Is he your Lord whom you love with all your heart, or are you following your own way? How's that working for you? Because of the Resurrection, Jesus is alive, full of love and forgiveness for anything we've done or left undone, and restore us in his grace. He is looking for his Paco. Is that you? Don't miss this opportunity today.