

“Breakfast for Everyone”

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Maybe I'm drawn to the story today of “breakfast on the beach” because of all the pictures John paints for us. If I showed the story to you image by image, instead of reading it to you, it could preach simply from the pictures.

What images do you remember that John creates from this third encounter between the resurrected Jesus and the disciples? Peter scrambling to put his clothes back on before diving into the water; the very specific count of fish – 153 of them – LARGE fish!; a net that stayed in tact even with the gargantuan catch; a charcoal fire; the freshly caught fish, grilling on it; “and bread,” as John says, and our imaginations go from one image of bread to another.

In Luke's gospel, he told another story that also happened alongside the Sea of Galilee. Luke's and John's beach stories happened about three years apart; these fishing stories seem to be bookends to Jesus' ministry with the disciples.

Luke's story is about John and his twin brother, James, and Simon, their fishing buddy. They were about to set out on a fishing trip. Then Jesus, who had been teaching in Galilee, got into Simon's boat, sat down, and began to teach right then and there. When Simon, whom Jesus would later name Peter, told Jesus they hadn't caught any fish, Jesus told him simply, "Put your nets down into the deep water." They did, and Simon and his crew caught so many fish that their nets began to break with the amazing catch! You remember what Jesus said next, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching people."

Luke's fishing story ends, "And when they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him."

In hearing John's story today – and Luke's – the bookends -- I wonder if the disciples Jesus called from their boats and nets that day at the beginning of his ministry could have imagined all the things that were going to happen in the three years they were off following Jesus, I wonder if their minds went back to that first huge catch Luke described, the one it took two boats to haul from the lake to the shore.

I wonder whether, when they returned to their boats, grieving and lonely for Jesus, that they had to relying on muscle memory as they got back to the work they had done before they had followed Jesus.

In the two weeks since Jesus's resurrection, the utter devastation of the crucifixion could surely have crowded out the memories of the past three years. But had they been able to think clearly, surely they wondered how anything could have prepared them for what they experienced following Jesus in his ministry?

.The crowds pressing in on him to welcome their children, others wanting Jesus to give them the sight they had never known, to heal their bleeding, and still others who hoped he would grant them new clarity of mind and purpose for their lives. The disciples had participated in miraculous meal of bread and fish appear for multitudes on a hillside, tasted the gift of bread and wine at the Passover. They had seen Jesus calm the storm and cry tears when his friend died. They had gained understanding for the question, "Who

is my neighbor?” and had asked Jesus himself to teach them to pray.

It had been quite a journey.

Jesus now appeared to them for the third time since his resurrection, this time as they were fishing. And as disciples were eating the fish that Jesus had grilled for them, he asked Peter a question that surely was meant particularly for Peter. Through the crackling of the early morning campfire, it surely must have sounded to the other disciples that it was a question for them, too.

Jesus asked: “Peter, do you love me more than these?”

And Peter replied: “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

A second time Jesus said to him, “Do you love me?”

Again, Peter replied: “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”

So Jesus said again: “Then tend my sheep.”

And a third time, Jesus asked, “Peter, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because Jesus had said that to him the third time.

And Peter said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

And the next thing Jesus said to him was “Follow me.”

In our day, Jesus offers the same invitation to us for he says, “Feed my sheep.” “Tend my lambs.” “Care for the least of these.” It always helps me to look toward ordinary human beings whose lives model Jesus’ care for God’s children.

I’ve been thinking this week about Dr. Paul Farmer. I don’t know how many of you are familiar with his remarkable life and legacy, but I know that some of you are because we watched a video about him at the gathering on Wednesday night. I couldn’t think about Jesus’ words “Feed my sheep,” without thinking of Paul Farmer.

Paul Farmer was an American physician who always knew he wanted to be a doctor. During his time at Duke he

got to know some Haitian people who were working in the migrant camps in North Carolina. Then, during his visits to Haiti, he had no doubt about his calling. He knew that lessening human suffering would be his life's work. Like other liberation theologians, Farmer had a preferential option for the poor.

Paul earned both a Ph.D. in medical anthropology and an M.D. from Harvard, where he taught and chaired the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine. Indeed, he rooted his professional life in his deep desire to tend and mend the world's wounds by bringing the medicine of mercy to his suffering brothers and sisters.”

In 1987, Paul and several of his Harvard colleagues established Partners in Health with his first primary setting in the village of Conge on the central plateau of Haiti. In its mission statement Partners in Health says, “We are a social justice organization that responds to the moral imperative to provide high-quality health care globally to those who need it most. We bring the benefits of modern medicine to those who have suffered from the overt and subtle injustices of the

world, in the past and in the present.” It ends with these words of Farmer’s: **“We refuse to accept that any life is worth less than another.”** Indeed, Farmer’s goal was to build hospitals in places like in neglected places in Haiti and Rwanda -- where even a village clinic was rare -- so that PIH could offer surgeries and other health services like those offer in Manhattan or Boston.

Steve Gardner reminded us the other night that the dance we had in this room to help Haiti in the wake of the earthquake in 2010 benefitted Partners in Health. In 2018, some of you may have heard Paul Farmer speak at Baylor.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta said, “If pure altruism exists in humans, it probably looks a lot like Dr. Paull Farmer.” And In her 2013 commencement speech at Duke, Melinda Gates said, *“I first met Paul in 2004 when I went to see him in Haiti. It took us forever to walk the 100 yards from our vehicle to the clinic because he introduced me to every single person we met along the way. I am not exaggerating. Every single person.*

As we moved along, he introduced each person to me by first and last names, wished their families well, and asked for an update

about their lives. He hugged people when he greeted them and looked them in the eyes through each conversation. If you believe love plays a role in healing, there was healing happening at every step of that journey.

On February 22, two days before the war in Ukraine began, Paul Farmer died in Rwanda. He was 62 years old. While thinking of our gospel today and the line – “Feed my sheep, tend my lambs” I thought of Paul Farmer.

One of Paul Farmer’s colleagues once asked him what had kept him in global health when so many people easily became disillusioned or burned out. His answer – “Doing hard things with friends.”

Friends, none of us is Paul Farmer. None of us was part of a group of disciples named Simon Peter. Or John. Or James. Or Thomas or Philip or Nathaniel, sitting around a fire on the beach while our fish grilled for breakfast.

We are a group of disciples called Preston and Sakina and Patty and Buddy and Louis and Brittany and a hundred other names meeting in a building where there is a table with bread waiting for us.

Jesus is the broken bread for each of us, for all of us, out of his love for us. And he asks us to break bread for the poor in spirit and the poor in body in our world, out of our love for him and out of our love for them.

The way Jesus speaks his words when he says, “Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs. Feed my sheep.” may land in each of our ears differently, depending on our interests, our responsibilities at the moment, our readiness to say “yes” to something new.

But let me encourage you to take time to consider each request someone makes to you. I know lots of people are making requests these days. I’m not encouraging you to say “yes” to every request, but I am encouraging you to consider them. Working on a job together, whether in this building or in our community or to provide for the health of our brothers and sisters half a globe away can be an act of showing our love to God. It can also lift our church’s soul!

This week I got an invitation from Tiffany Harris at DaySpring, asking me to tell you that their church’s dream of opening a home in Waco for immigrants is really happening

this summer. The home will be a place of hospitality where Waco volunteers can help companion the asylum seekers with Christ's peace and love. Tiffini has invited us to one of their two days of service at the end of this month.

Martie reminded me later that same day about Carver Park's Food Pantry, a place where you can make it easier for people in Waco to get food they need for their families. Our partnership with Carver Park is the beginning of a ministry that has the potential of bringing new life to both churches, both neighborhoods.

Need some more ideas? If 30 or 35 of you decided to volunteer for extended care, each of you would need to serve only about three times a year. Meals on Wheels needs someone on Friday and someone on Wednesday to complete our team of drivers to deliver meals. Like to cook? There's always a rotating list of folks who need help with food when a loved one is sick or hospitalized. One of the biggest needs right now is for someone who would like to teach children's Sunday School – and another someone who loves spending time with youth – teaching them in Sunday School or hearing

their highs and lows on Sunday nights, taking them to spend a morning at Mission Waco or the Hunger Farm.

Welcoming new friends. Visiting or calling people you've missed. Praying *with* people who want someone to pray with them, not only for them. Helping get things organized – labeling, sorting, driving things across town that need to get across town, celebrating graduations, telling others your new ideas for a mission or ministry, leading in worship, being the church photographer for a month or two, leading a book group on your most recent best book of the year!, moving something that had landed in a different spot than where it was supposed to be back to its original home, quietly fixing something that needed fixing before it caused a problem, tending flowers in the big pot by the front door – just that one pot – for the summer . . .

