

I have shared with many of you that I do not watch much TV but I do keep track of my reality cooking shows like Hell's Kitchen and MasterChef. One of the most memorable moments of Hell's Kitchen, a show hosted by the famous chef and restaurateur Gordon Ramsey, is one of the first episodes in his early seasons of Hell's Kitchen. One in particular is one where he gathers all 20 of the contestants who had been carefully selected as the finest chefs who applied to be on the show. As they gathered together, they were given the opportunity to get to know each other as they were put in a luxurious limousine bus with everything they could ask for, drinks, food, and entertainment. They rode around enjoying themselves as they introduced themselves to each other, sharing their dreams and aspirations, and obviously, their passion for food, cooking, and their hope to be the winner of Hell's Kitchen and become a world renowned chef. Then, at the end of their time on this amazing bus, they were let off at the Hell's Kitchen restaurant ready to meet Gordon Ramsey and to hear about their first cooking challenge. As the announcer had them stand in a line looking towards the door to his office to welcome Gordon who will lead them in their challenge, they waited and waited and Gordon did not appear. The contestants looked left and right with puzzled looks asking where Gordon could be: Lo and behold, one of the contestants in line with them started to take off their glasses and a very real looking beard and a wig to reveal that Gordon had been with them the whole time. From the time they got on the bus, riding through town, enjoying themselves, all the contestants had no idea that Gordon had been with them disguised as one of them getting to know them in a non threatening environment. Knowing that Gordon himself might be intimidating to them and hinder him from getting to know each contestant, Gordon hid himself until he was ready to reveal himself. What a dramatic way to be introduced to the man who would change the lives of the chef contestants!

Well, what a way for Jesus to introduce his resurrected self to his disciples. The same disciples who had followed Jesus throughout his ministry experienced a huge let down as they witnessed his death on the cross, his disappearance from the tomb, and his miraculous comeback when he met with many of his disciples as he entered a room with closed doors two times, at least what we are told in the gospel of John. Jesus seems to be pretty theatrical in his appearances or curtain calls after this death and resurrection. And today's reading is not any different.

For the disciples, they were back to their day job before they met Jesus, on the boat catching fish. They had done it all their lives; this was all they knew how to do, following after their fathers we were told in Luke 5. They had put down their nets and left their families to follow Jesus as he called them to follow him at the beginning of his ministry. As they had always done in the past, the disciples went out to catch fish in the night, which was the best time to catch them, but they had caught nothing. Then, at dawn, when they were coming in after a long night to call it a day, Jesus called out to them to cast their net and they caught so much fish in the net they could not haul all of it into the boat, they had to drag it. This was when Peter realized that it was Jesus! We are not told this in what we

read today, but we can speculate that Peter and the disciples remembered what they had experienced before of Jesus. In Luke 5 when Jesus called the disciples the first time, he performed this same miracle. He had told these same men to cast their net in a certain place after they had caught nothing all night and out of utter obedience, they let down their nets catching 2 boats full of fish which they thought would sink their boats. Smart disciples... same miracle, same Jesus right?

So what does this scripture passage teach us? What are some points to reflect on as we study what it means to live for Jesus and love Jesus through the stories of Jesus' appearance after his resurrection?

First, Jesus revealed himself, not just in a quiet upper room or the quiet of the night when the disciples fished. Jesus appeared to them also in the hustle and bustle of the beginning of the day in what they might call their mundane day job.

Many of us may think that Jesus would appear to us in an extraordinary way like the blinding light that met Paul on the road to Damascus or in the upper room with Jesus entering through locked doors. But we are reminded today that Jesus can appear to us in an ordinary place; work, our every day, the hustle and bustle of the days happenings.

Many times when we say we heard from God or met Jesus, our minds usually go to a time of prayer, during a worship service or a Bible study and think it odd that we sometimes don't meet Jesus there. But today, we are reminded that we can look for the resurrected Christ in the ordinary places of our lives too. We can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in times of pain and sorrow, in times of quiet and calm alone, and in new experiences and out of our comfort zones. We can also experience God in the midst of the busy day, amongst the gathering of many people, and in the midst of following tradition and places of familiarity.

A colleague and assistant professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology at Philips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Rev. Annie Lockhart Gilroy, who helped organize our current sermon series on Loving and Living for Jesus, said this: "In the stories of Jesus seeing disciples after the resurrection, several times we see Jesus having conversations with his disciples without them recognizing him- at least not right away. They don't recognize him until he does something familiar. For Mary, it was when Jesus called her name. For the disciples on the Road to Emmaus in Luke's Gospel, it was when Jesus broke the bread as he had done on the night of the Last Supper. And for Peter, James, and John, it was when Jesus led them to this miraculous catch. Sometimes, we are so preoccupied, we miss the movement of Jesus that is right in front of us. Maybe it is because he doesn't look the way we think he would. Maybe it is because we don't expect to see him work. We don't always recognize Jesus, but Jesus knows how to make himself

familiar to his disciples. It isn't the same for everyone, but he knows us so well that it can be custom-made."

So how does Jesus move in your life in such a way that you know it is the movement of God's Spirit? Can you think back to a time when you could not recognize that God was moving in your life? Can you think of a time when you realized that Jesus was calling out to you when you could not recognize it then? In what ways would Jesus call us in our times of hustle and bustle and in the times of the mundane and familiarity? Could Jesus be calling us to follow him in times we don't expect it? What could Jesus be calling us to do?

Secondly, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loves Jesus. We can imagine the hurt Peter would have felt being asked by Jesus three times as if Peter did not mean what he said or that he was lying. Then Peter replies to Jesus that he knows everything and that Peter does love him. Jesus does know Peter loves him, but maybe Peter needed a reminder. Maybe because Peter was feeling guilty, Jesus wanted to relieve him of that by giving him 3 chances to make that up, to give Peter the opportunity to confess his love as much as he denied it in fear.

Throughout scripture, we learn that loving God is loving neighbors; that when one loves God, they must love neighbor, that one cannot love God and not love neighbor. God loves neighbor just as much as God loves us. We are taught that loving all that God loved is loving God to whom everything belongs. "It is not enough to say that the other people know that they are loved, love must be followed with action". So Jesus responds to Peter's confession of love for him with three commands, "Feed my lamb, tend my sheep, and feed my sheep."

I truly believe that Christ calls us in different ways and for different purposes in life, but we are all called to profess our love for God anytime and anywhere, in whatever we do. As God commands us to love God and love neighbor as God's greatest commandment, we must follow Jesus' example to do the same. To love God and love neighbor, which is inseparable, inextricable. How are we loving God, and how are we loving God by loving our neighbors? How are we following after Jesus in loving God and loving neighbor?

Jesus calls out to each of us today. In what we may think is another ordinary Sunday, another worship service, another Holy Communion, Jesus calls out to us and He wants to be recognized. He calls out to each one of us, "Do you love me? Follow me, and care for my sheep." How should we respond?