

Third Sunday of Easter**Year C****RCL**

- Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)
- Revelation 5:11-14
- John 21:1-19
- Psalm 30

After being on the hold list at my library for 5 months, the email finally arrived- Michelle Obama's book "Becoming" became available to me to read this winter. Among the many stories of her life, she tells a story about a dear friend of hers, who at the age of 26, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. She was overwhelmed by all the details of her friend's diagnosis- a friend that was bright and breezy, high- spirited, and would drop everything to find her happy. Obama hung up the phone, and over the winter and spring, she went back to work. She writes that she was a lawyer and lawyers worked. In fact, lawyers worked all the time. As many billable hours as possible. Her work was important. So, she kept showing up and did what she had always done, even though her friend's health was deteriorating rapidly.

And that's where we find Peter today. A lot had happened recently. His friend and teacher had died a violent death, and days later was found to be resurrected. Jesus then appeared to Peter and the disciples a number of times, showing himself to them. Yet, Peter goes back to his old life as though his encounter with Jesus hasn't changed everything. Shouldn't he be doing something different and new? But what if we understood Peter's action in a new way? Peter would go on to something different and new, but first he needed to do something familiar while he tried to get his head around everything.

What would it look like to lay aside any judgment we might have about Peter processing all that happened? I think it makes sense he would return to fishing. It was his

life, his lifestyle, his livelihood long before those three years with Jesus. He had to do something. We often look back at passages like these thinking that Peter and the disciples shouldn't have returned to their ordinary lives but rather should've been out there spreading the Good News after everything that happened. But what about what was going on in their hearts and minds? They weren't doing nothing. They were with one another in community. They went boating and fishing. Just when you thought the Gospel of John was ended, we're given this action-packed chapter of miracles and resurrection breaking through ordinary life.

It couldn't end right yet, because Jesus was still showing up. For them, a new day had begun after a long and dark night. These post-resurrection stories are about telling the stories of how God shows up. Peter and the disciples may or may not have made the right choice after Jesus' death and resurrection, but it doesn't matter. Jesus shows up regardless- in this way on the beach, like many times before. He waited on that beach for them. In his presence not only in body, but in his tender care and love. He started a fire. He was there and waiting- ready for them to see him- it seems like he'd wait forever. And he was ready to feed them in whatever places they needed sustenance. They did have a hard night without catching any fish. But Jesus showed up and everything changed. Professional fishman, they had a rough season- as we look back across the Gospels, the disciples never actually caught a fish without Jesus' help. Even though the disciples seemed stuck, they weren't for long. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus got moving, and he got everyone else moving and restored to life too.

I'm glad the Gospel of John didn't end with that line we heard last week, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book." It's great for us to see the fullness of the ways the Divine walks among us- in times of grief and sadness, in times of disappointment or struggle, in times of joy and celebration. Simply put the Divine is always there and ready to be revealed to us. How has God shown up in your life? Or maybe you are wondering to yourself the opposite of this question- that there were times that you needed God, and you felt God hasn't shown

up. Where was God then? We learn a lot about Peter and the other disciples, but this story is really all about God and God's presence in our lives. At the ending of this chapter, and the ultimate ending of the Gospel, we read, "But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." There is more of God yet for us to experience.

It's comfortable to want to return to something familiar when in uncertain times. Obama found it remarkable, when she looked back, on how she acted when confronted with the devastating news of her friend's cancer. There was no choice in her mind of what to do but to return to work. She knew her world around her and her dreams of life with her friend had irrevocably changed. But something inside of her insisted it wasn't happening. She regretted how she acted, how she didn't go to see her friend sooner. Maybe, at the end of his life, Peter thought the same. That he should've been out in the world proclaiming new life the moment he knew of Jesus' resurrection. But Jesus doesn't leave Peter at his place of despair, the fire around which he last sat and denied Jesus 3 times during Jesus' trial. Rather, Jesus lets Peter know that in whatever way Peter is able to love him, it is enough. That through that love, even if it takes time, it's ok- it's enough that Peter will indeed be given the strength to stand the test and lead the Church. God shows up in our lives in whatever way we're ready. And in that is incredible hope.