

“O God, you have turned our
mourning into dancing;
you have clothed us with joy!” AMEN!

Author and Pastor Glenn Ludwig retells
the ancient folktale about “a tiger that
was brought up with a herd of goats.

From the day [the tiger’s] eyes opened
all it saw was a goat’s life, so it
became [the tiger’s] style of life, too.

It munched grass with the rest,
butted heads with the younger
goats for recreation, and

learned to bleat in an odd
sort of way a sound that resembled, or
so it thought, a goat’s voice.

Once in a while there was a nagging voice
inside the tiger that said,

“You don’t belong to this life!”

But it always put it aside as fantasy,
some disturbing intrusion from
the world of dreams.

If this present life didn't satisfy the tiger,
then it just marked it off a discontent
that always hovers around the edges of
any lifestyle.

So, the tiger, stayed with the goat's way of life
because it believed that was
the way life had to be.

Then, one day a different
tiger came into the clearing.

This tiger had grown up to know who it was.

It looked into the clearing and spotted the goats
and it roared an earth shattering roar.”

The goats all fled for their lives.

“But the tiger that had grown up
with the goats paused, it didn't run.

It wanted to stay.

The tiger's roar had stirred some lost memory
within it and it awakened in him a life
it had never known but a life for
which it was created.”

There is a special moment in chapter 21
of John's gospel that is unlike any other.

Like the tiger's roar, Jesus calls out to his disciples.

That part, the calling, is not new.

Jesus already called his disciples to
accompany Him in chapter 1 of John.

And miraculously they did.

So what's different in chapter 21,
is a new calling was made by Jesus.

This new calling was made because
a lot had changed since chapter 1.

Back then, they were professional fishermen who
left everything to follow this teacher
who asked them
“What they were looking for?”

They'd had John the Baptist, then,
to point Jesus out to them proclaiming,
“Behold the Lamb of God!”

But now, in chapter 21, they are both gone.

The three or so years of following Jesus
had ended with crucifixion and resurrection.

And God knew that the struggling disciples
required a sort of re-set.

They needed to be called, again.

This time, not to accompany Jesus,
but a calling to them...
to be in the world.

They needed God's "reset" to show them
how they were supposed to be disciples
without their teacher.

To know that God was still confident in humanity
and this calling, on this side of the resurrection,
would teach them and us about
how we know this is God. (Pause)

What were they supposed to do after?

Their question is also our question.

Chapter 21 begins with the phrase,
"After these things..." in verse 1.

A phrase that leads us into the account of
Jesus' fourth appearance in
post-resurrected form.

Remember that Jesus appeared
to the women in the garden first.

The author means for us to know
this account happened after Jesus' appearance
to affirm Thomas need
to see and touch Jesus.

His third appearance to the 11 disciples.

Then in verse 4, "Just after daybreak..."

The author accounts that "after catching nothing"
Jesus appeared.

Verse 9, "After they went ashore..."

Accounts for the "after" experience following
the successful catch of fish when they listened
to Jesus' direction.

And then in verse 15, "After they had
finished breakfast..."

After, after, after... all these things,

Jesus addressed Peter in an intimate dialogue
that not only affirms Peter's

forgiveness from God but gives us concrete
directions on how to be Jesus' disciple, after. (Pause)

Before we go there, let's look to
what the disciple's did right.

We don't get to do that very often do we? :-)

Talk about what they did well!

First, in the time of crisis they went back
to what they were experts at.

Peter said, "I am going fishing..."

Their "usual" was fishing.

It's natural and therapeutic (even)
to want to go back to the things you're
good at when crises happen.

The second thing they did well was that
they stayed together.

"We're going with you." They said.

This continued relationship with each other
surely impacted the experience with Jesus.

At the least, without each other they would
not have been able to pull in the miraculous
catch of 153 large fish!

Third good decision...

Then they made the Easter proclamation.

“It is the Lord!”

They knew from Jesus’ voice and
the result of following his directions
made it clear to them that God
was in their midst.

Then, John (the gospel writer)
does something most of us miss,
but it is another thing the disciple’s do right.

After they stayed together,
after the call,
after the catch,
after the recognizing,

Jesus said, “Bring some of that fish you just caught.”

It was an example of making
an offering of Thanks to God.

A “first-fruits” giving back for
the abundance God gives.

They gave an offering back to God and
settled into the Meal with Jesus.

They didn’t need to ask...
they knew it was the Lord. (Pause)

Like the tiger in the front end of the sermon.

They knew Jesus’ voice and command
reminded them (and us) who they were
and who we are.

We need to be reminded who we are, too.

When we find it tempting to go back
to the ordinariness of our lives or resort
to think that’s nothing much

has really changed on this
side of the resurrection, Jesus calls us
in a voice we recognize.

A voice that empowers and gives new life.

Simply, we get to the point
that we know this is God. (Pause)

Now, back to the intimate dialogue
Peter and Jesus share.

How do you imagine Jesus' question:
Do you love me?

Was it in a tone that pointed to Peter's failings?

Was it a three pronged magical remedy
to undo Peter's three denials?

Hmmm... or was it something much deeper?

Jesus answer to the "now what?" question.

This voice, this question, tells us that
we are to be about His business.

Feeding lambs, feeding sheep and tending
to them were duties of the Good Shepherd
according to John's gospel chapter 10.

But, now they are Peter's duties, and
now they are the other disciples duties, and
they are our duties, too.

For us to show that the love that Jesus has
for the world can keep going

without Jesus' physical presence because
we know who we are and we recognize
the voice that calls us.

To be together and in the world...
Called here and sent out...
with purpose, with love and with hope.

AMEN!