**Sermon Easter 3C**  1st May 2022

Mornington & Glenaven Acts 9:1-20, John 21:1-19

In each of our lives there are periods of uncertainty, defeat, loss. This can be in a multitude of ways, some of them in things which affect millions, some much more personal A job is lost, the political climate suddenly and unexpectedly becomes colder and inhospitable, a relationship we imagined to be central to our lives ends, of course the experience of a pandemic is one we have all shared

What do we do?

Though life seems to be calling us, however reluctantly to something new we – in all likelihood – retreat .

We seek refuge in the past, in memory of better days, we look through photo albums, seek the company of our oldest friends, we comfort eat, we take shelter in a way. Like a sick child we regress.

I think that is what we see with Peter.

As I often say this season, the resurrection accounts are here and there, disparate and confusing. Peter appeared in the Gospel on Easter Sunday morning, but we find him now where we first met him. Back by the Sea of Galilee, back doing what he was doing when Jesus met him, back what he had been fated to do since his birth. Fish, here is Peter with his nets. Here he is with four other disciples in a retreat to the familiar.

In challenging times we just want to step aside. But we're not called to live in safe harbours on our worst days We're called to the grace of another day to grow towards being the person God created us to be. We are called to live beyond our every defeat..

The grace of another day is repeated over and over again in scriptures: When Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of bearing children, Isaac was born. Moses on the run from murder was called to go back and confront Pharaoh. Elijah at the point of suicide was challenged by God, and Paul was confronted as he was on the way to Damascus to persecute the church to be a church planter. Our Gospel today is a story of being given another day.

In the Methodist tradition there is the story of John Wesley. Wesley had tried all the normal ways of responding to God's calling. He had been a priest, a professor of theology, a missionary, but then he was given the grace of another day on May 24, 1738, at a quarter to nine when his heart was strangely warmed. Wesley was given the grace of another day.

When life is hard, maybe we too need to pause, to pray for and to seek the grace of another day. We need to have the courage that when the gift is given to use it as best we can to do the will of God for our life. There is no limit to when the gift can be given.

The grace of another day brings with it the challenge to change. Peter could no longer be comfortable to ease back into fishing. He now knew the journey he had set out on was not over. He was being given the gift of another opportunity to become what Jesus had envisioned for him.

All of us on our faith journeys will need this gift of another chance. We need to stay committed until we grow to be more as God would have us to be. It is not the task of a day, but rather one of all our days. To be faithful is not easy. It is not merely wishing for a better world, it is being ready to work for it every day, to realize with each new day we are being given the gift of opportunity.

Peter, if you really, really love Jesus, you are going to walk away from the safe harbour of that boat and tend his flock. You have to let go and let God be in charge. You can't retreat forever.

To claim the gift of another day does not mean that we are always prepared to charge full speed ahead. Many days we feel as Peter and the others did when they retreated back to fishing, like we just want a comfortable favourite chair or pair of well broken-in slippers. We like the familiar, but if we want the full benefit of another opportunity, we need to push ourselves to go on. As in our lesson example, don't just say you love; show it by your actions.

Sydney Harris, a newspaper columnist in Chicago in the mid-part of the 20th century, once told about a time he gave a talk on creative writing to a group of amateur writers. Afterwards, someone asked, "Mr. Harris, what do you do when you don't feel like writing?" "I write," he answered. "That's the difference between an amateur and a professional. I write even when I don't feel like writing."

Can you imagine for a moment as Jesus stood by the lake and looked out at Peter and the others fishing what he must have felt? Those on the boat were the heart of the team he had spent his ministry preparing to go to all the world with the Good News. He had formed them in the community to be his body. They were his plan to spread the word and what was happening. They were spending their night fishing. Had they not heard anything? Was it to all end here? If we count the number in the lesson, there were seven of the original twelve fishing. Of course, Judas was gone, but four others had gone their separate way as well. Jesus had to be worried.

As the disciples came near, Jesus asks if they had caught anything. They answered they had not. So he told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat, which they did and were successful. Then they saw it was Jesus, and Peter in his excitement, jumped into the sea to get to Jesus, while the others brought the net filled with fish ashore. Jesus had prepared a fire to cook some of the fish for breakfast, and they shared bread and fish together. Then Jesus turns toward the boat and the fishing nets the disciples had been using. That boat represented a safe harbour for Peter and the others that had gone out that night. It had been their life before they met Jesus. And now they were being confronted by Jesus, "Do you love me more than these?" Of course Peter replied that he did. Then Jesus answered all three times, "Then show it." He called Peter to feed the lambs and tend his sheep. He was challenging Peter to be about what he envisioned when Jesus saw in Peter the potential to be the foundation of the church.

Peter had retreated to what was a safe harbour, and now Jesus was giving him the gift of another day to be faithful. There was still time for Peter to become the fiery preacher of Pentecost, to confront the high priest, the elders and the scribes as they assembled, to reach out to Cornelius, to be delivered from prison, and finally according to tradition, to be martyred in Rome.

We, too, are being challenged to believe that not only can we have the grace of another day, but in that day we can change and, in changing, change the world around us.

Jesus makes it clear that the gift of another day is not to be taken lightly. There will come a day when there are no more days. Jesus says, "But then you grow old. You will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you to where you do not wish to go." He is saying to Peter now is your opportunity to get on with the mission I have given you. Take the grace of another day. He challenges him by saying, "Follow me." Drop those nets. Leave those boats. Get out of your comfort zone and follow me."

Clutching our particular nets do we hear these words as words to us, do we too have the courage to let go and follow?

May it be so among us