

21 After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. 8 The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about [200 cubits/ a hundred yards] off.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus and Peter

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."

During my last semester of law school, Professor and former Dean Paul Selby one day told the class: "May of you are going to be graduating after this semester, and you are excited about that. I want to tell you something that many of you don't realize: You are about to give up one of the greatest blessings of all, when you leave school. Each semester, it doesn't matter how well or how poorly it has gone, the semester ends, and you get to start over. Each semester gives you a chance for a 'Do-Over.' After you graduate, you will lose that. After graduation, all of life runs together. You will finish a case, and will not have time to revel in it or to reflect on what you have learned, for there will be so many other cases waiting – no, screaming – for your

attention. All of life will run together, once semesters end. You have a hard time now realizing the truth of what I say, but one day you will.”

And he was right. I didn't fully grasp it then, but I surely did later. Do-Overs and Start-Overs are great things.

And Jesus was the BEST at giving Do-Overs. With Jesus, Do-Overs are always possible. Today's Gospel is all about that – in at least three ways:

1. But Do-Overs are not just about feeling good about yourself. With Jesus, Do-Overs are about actually changing.
2. Do-Overs with Jesus can come at any time. It's never too late for a Do-Over with Jesus. But Jesus requires you to let go.
3. And, finally, Do-Overs with Jesus not only require letting go, which can be a wee bit scary, but will always work out, so long as we hold on to Jesus.

I want us to start in the middle of today's Gospel lesson, and then we'll go to the end, and then back to the beginning.

1. Do-Overs are not just about feeling good about yourself. With Jesus, Do-Overs are about actually changing.

Peter is taken aside by Jesus, after they've had their breakfast, cooked at a charcoal fire. The remembrance of the last time Peter stood at an outdoor charcoal fire – in the courtyard of Caiaphas – was probably not lost on Peter. It was there, in that place, where Peter had denied his Lord three times before the rooster crowed.

And now, even though we are told that it grieved Peter, he was given a threefold chance to proclaim his love for Jesus.

It seems like this was THE turn around point in Peter's life – to be offered this threefold liturgical chance to repent of his threefold denial of Jesus. This was Peter's Do-Over Point. Even though in the Gospel of John, Peter had not been the “star.” That was reserved for “the disciple whom Jesus loved – John,” but from now on, Peter takes on the leadership of the Church.

But Jesus also makes sure that Peter gets the point. Do-Over requires more than just remorse. Do-Over requires REPENTANCE, which means: CHANGE OF CONDUCT.

Jesus makes it clear that in THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN talk is cheap; deeds are what matter. (He had earlier told them that *not everyone who merely calls me Lord will experience the Kingdom of Heaven.*)

If you love me, Peter, then show me. Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.

Garrison Keillor, that wonderful storyteller about his historically fictional, but true hometown, Lake Wobegon, tells about **LARRY**. Larry has been saved twelve times – an all-time record for a church that never gives altar calls. Keillor said that there wasn't even an organ playing "Just As I Am" in the background. Regardless, between 1953 and 1961, Larry Sorenson came forward twelve (12) times, weeping buckets and crumpled up at the communion railing, to the shock of the minister, who had just delivered a dry sermon on stewardship. "Even the fundamentalists got tired of Larry being saved," said Keillor.

Jesus shows us, here in the middle of today's Gospel lesson, **DO-OVERS REQUIRE MORE THAN MERE REMORSE. REPENTANCE – TURNING AROUND – IS ALSO REQUIRED.**

As **C.S. Lewis** put it: "Fine feelings, new insights, great interest in religion mean nothing unless they make our actual behavior better"

Or, in the same message that has been around since the 12th chapter of Genesis: **We are blessed – not merely to feel good. We are blessed in order to be a blessing.**

Do-Overs are not just about feeling good about yourself. With Jesus, Do-Overs are about actually changing.

Let's move forward past this part of the dialogue between Jesus and Peter, to hear the monologue of what Jesus tells Peter lies ahead.

2. Do-Overs with Jesus can come at any time. It's never too late for a Do-Over with Jesus. But Jesus requires you to let go.

That thing of which Peter needed to make confession and to receive forgiveness and to turn his life around had occurred in the courtyard of Caiaphas. Why had Peter denied Jesus?

He denied Jesus because he was scared. And he denied Jesus because he relied more on his own ability to take care of himself (telling a lie three times, even underscored the last time with a curse) than he relied on God's taking care of him.

So now, Jesus tells Peter about what is going to happen in the future – in verse 18: ***Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.***

Some say that this was a prophecy of the time of death Peter would suffer – crucifixion.

Others will tell you that Jesus is talking about what happens to many of us – in our senior years: We no longer get to do what we want, and we spend a lot of time in places and situations we would rather not.

And what is it that we would rather do? We would rather BE IN CONTROL OF OUR OWN LIVES. The problem for many of us, however, is that we don't do a very good job of that. We think that we know best what is best for a good life.

So often, I see Jesus give people a DO-OVER in their SENIOR YEARS that they don't really want.

Too often, I see seniors whose definition of success is being able to do what they used to do, to look the way they used to look.

But DO-OVERS with Jesus require us to let go of our preconceived notions and to let Jesus be in charge.

So often I am blessed by my profession to be with people in the places of their being led where they do not want to go – nursing homes, ICU's, in the land of limited physical activity – where they come to understand (sometimes for the very first time) the depth of God's Love and Providence, and come to understand (sometimes for the very first time) what Grace and Faith really mean.

It really does take a whole lifetime to prepare a soul for eternity.

And Jesus' Do-Overs can never come too late, so long as we are willing to let go, and to let Jesus Do Us Over Right.

3 -- Finally, I want us to go back to the beginning of today's Gospel lesson, to see how:

Do-Overs with Jesus not only require letting go, which can be a wee bit scary, but Do-Overs with Jesus will always work out, so long as we hold on to Jesus.

The disciples, we know from scripture, have already seen the resurrected Lord twice. But they still do not seem to have caught on to what it all means. They **still have not realized** that **Easter Faith means submitting to God just like Jesus did, in order to get it right.** They went out on their own – back to their prior calling, as fishermen instead of shepherds.

But, following their own will, they had not been successful. Some of you might remember this as being similar to a story that happened in other Gospels at the beginning of Jesus' calling. Actually, nowhere in any of the Gospels are we ever told about the disciples being able to fish without Jesus' help. (And they are the fishermen, he the carpenter!)

But, here, they listen to Jesus, and he gives them a DO-OVER of their work. And they are incredibly successful – 153 BIG FISH! But, here’s an important detail that so often gets overlooked in the attempts to figure out what “153 fish” means: THE NET DOES NOT BREAK!

Ever since the first century, the image for the Church has been THE SHIP. We see it in our Chrismon ornaments during December.

We are on the SHIP OF THE CHURCH, here at Saint Marks.

When we keep our eyes upon Jesus. When we **let go of our self-interest** and **self-control**, and **allow Jesus to Do Us Over**, then we **need not be afraid** – of **either FAILURE or of SUCCESS**. And both can be equally frightening.

Do-Overs with Jesus not only require letting go, which can be a wee bit scary, but Do-Overs with Jesus will always work out, so long as we hold on to Jesus.

Today, we have all come here with different stories and with different needs.

- Some of us are weighed down with guilt; some with fear.
- Some of us feel overwhelmed by circumstances that seem beyond our control.
- Others of us, like a soul-less, bottom-less wasp, are so busy exercising control that we don’t realize how lost we are.
- And some of us are confronting blessings that we don’t recognize as such, and, right now, it seems like life is spinning terribly out of control.

Remember: Jesus does Do-Overs. And Jesus does them best.

(1) You have to let God in order to let God fix things.

(2) You have to be willing to be changed in order to be done over right

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.