

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

Today, may I go to a Bible scene.

I don't have a Bible with me to quote you the exact verses, but the place where I'd like to visit, in the present tense, is found in the last chapter of the Gospel of John. It's after the Crucifixion. It's after the Resurrection. The disciples have seen their Lord twice in His new form. Peter is still deeply remorseful over denying his Lord three times. He's tried to block it out of his mind, but he just can't. Can you imagine the shame, the deep regret of blatantly denying the One you love most in the world? Of not being there when he needed you? Of not standing by the One you love more than life itself? I can imagine.

Oh, one doesn't get over that type of betrayal easily. Jesus knew this. I believe He didn't want to ascend to His Father until He'd comforted Peter and until Peter had accepted His forgiveness and there was reconciliation. Then Simon Peter would be equipped for his ministry of being "the rock."

They were fishing. How often going back to the routine of work helps stabilize a topsy-turvy world. In a month's time they'd seen their Lord and Master stripped, beaten, and crucified. They'd seen the Body that they loved, the King whom they adored, for whom they'd been willing to forsake all, executed like a common criminal.

He was the Messiah. They knew it. He'd performed miracles upon miracles. He'd fed the hungry, healed the afflicted, raised the dead. He was the Messiah. They knew it, but they deserted Him. They ran and hid, afraid they, too, might be killed. But wasn't living in fear worse than death?

And then they saw their Lord resurrected -- first Mary Magdalene -- then Peter and John - and then all of them. They never knew when or where or how long He'd stay. The emotional drain was incredible. He was alive. He'd be with them and then He'd be gone and they'd be alone. Ecstasy! Agony. So many emotions seemed to have been ripped from them. The highs, the lows, the unanswered questions.

Peter said, "I'm going fishing," so they all went. It was easier to let him take charge; then you didn't have to think. All night long, they fished - nothing. They were exhausted: mentally, physically, emotionally. Their tired eyes had watched the dark waters all night as if in a trance. Nothing. They caught nothing. They felt nothing.

Dawn broke. They'd have to go in. Maybe they could sleep, could dream. Maybe their Lord would show Himself again today. Sleep. Eat. Work. Sleep. Eat. Work. It was all such an effort. They knew He was alive. They knew He was near. They knew everything wasn't finished. He'd told them so. But when? But how? But where? They had each resolved never to forsake Him again. They were His till death and beyond. But where was He?

A light starts to flicker on the beach. They all turn their gaze to this new diversion. John said, "It is the Lord." The quiet assurance in his voice leaves no room for doubt. Each disciple's heart starts to pound. They know it's the Lord. Peter jumps out of the boat and starts swimming. Even at the risk of drowning, he's got to reach the shore. He's got to tell the Lord he's sorry. He's got to ask for His forgiveness. Peter's broken. Peter's repentant. Peter can't stand this void. Jesus knows. That's why, as they gather and sit around the fire eating fish, the Master turns to Peter and says:

"Peter, son of Jonah, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord."

"Feed my sheep."

A second time he speaks, again directly to Peter, as if no one else is present. The other disciples stop eating and stare at Peter, whose face seems flushed. Is it from the fire or from the inquisition?

"Peter, son of Jonah, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord."

"Tend my lambs."

The disciples sense something is going on between the two, which they are only allowed to observe. Peter seems to be nervous. Who wouldn't be? But still, who wouldn't want to be singled out by the Lord? Love seems to be pouring out of Jesus like His blood had done earlier. Something unexplainable is

being witnessed. The other disciples know it. They are reverently quiet.

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?”

For the third time the question is asked. Peter is crushed. He feels like the Lord is testing him to see if he will deny Him again. HE IS SORRY! Doesn't the Lord Jesus know this?

“Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you!”

The Lord smiles. The salve of reconciliation has been tenderly applied to Peter's wounds of denial. Peter is healed. A miracle has been witnessed, just as real as the crippled man who now walks. The weight of remorse has been removed through Christ's reconciliatory forgiveness. Peter is himself once more, in fact, even more so.

In the now relaxed atmosphere, the feast with their Lord continues. A pleasant hum of conversation, like so many other occasions, can be heard. Their Lord is with them and they are enjoying Him.

Peter stands up, as he'd so often done over the years, and asks, “What about John?” In other words, Lord, you've told me about my ministry and mission, but I want to know what John will get to do. Will he and I be doing the same thing? Silently he wondered, will we be competing for position or for Your love?

Jesus gives His love-flowing smile once more. All the other disciples relax and smile, too. This is the old impulsive Peter talking again, the one they all love. Peter's childlike curiosity has returned. Their world seems right once more.

“Peter, forget about John,” our Lord says, “If I want him to live forever, what is it to you?” In other words, Peter, be true to your own calling. Keep your eyes on Me, not on others. Let me design, in love, your ministry and every other one of my sheep’s. You must be true to the call I give to you. You just be true to the call I give to you.

That is the message, Pilgrim, for this letter. That is the one that is often so hard for me to follow. . . I totally identify with the standing up Peter who questions, “What about John?” I think of each precious Christian I meet. The Lord Jesus Christ has a tailor-made, custom designed ministry for each and every one of us.

I believe it is important that we keep our eyes on the Lord and His purpose for each one of us individually, not on another’s calling.

What an unusual ministry. He was true to the calling, which he believed was from the Lord.

What an unusual ministry. She was true to the calling, which she believed was from the Lord.

Wouldn’t that, Pilgrim, be a grand epitaph?

Go, Pilgrim. Go where our Lord is leading you and you alone. Peace.

*Your sister in Christ,
Lucy*