

Easter Giving and Living

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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." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt 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." John 21:15-17

The Gospels record several appearances of Jesus to his disciples and followers after His resurrection, and the one recorded in John 21 contains an important stewardship message. Jesus' triad of questions to Peter is symmetrical with Peter's three-fold denial of Jesus on the morning of the crucifixion, and scholars find even deeper meanings in Jesus' choice of words, as He moves from "feed my lambs" to "tend my sheep" to "feed my sheep." But the charge that Jesus makes to Peter, and down the centuries to us too, is clear: Jesus expects those who follow Him and bear His name to tend, feed and minister to a world that needs God's saving grace through the risen Christ.

How do we do that? How do we capture the triumphant joy of Easter and make it a daily way of life in our stewardship lives of prayer, presence, giving and service? One way is to notice that Jesus doesn't put a time constraint on His charge to Peter and to us. The risen Christ leads us into the future. The need is now and the need will exist tomorrow. Our challenge as followers of Jesus is to capture the energy and enthusiasm of Easter and allow it to propel us into the future God has in store for us.

The high liturgical season of Eastertide lasts fifty days, ending on Pentecost Sunday, which many consider the birthday of the church. However, as Martin Luther said, "Each Sunday is a little Easter." May the spirit of Easter infuse us daily with the joy of giving in response to God's amazing grace in Jesus Christ.

Happy Easter! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!