Introduction

(As you begin, read Micah 6:8:)

He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

So what does that look like? When someone lives in the way the prophet describes, what does it look like? Jesus not only fulfills the Old Testament. He embodies it. Jesus lives out a verse like Micah 6:8. Consider one particular morning with Jesus and his disciples . . .

Getting to the Heart

Breakfast—it’s a guy thing. Not brunch. Breakfast. Go out early in the morning, in the middle of the week. Walk into your local café and see who is sitting at the counter. Breakfast is a guy thing.

But breakfast is also a God thing! I’m thinking especially about one early morning breakfast that began this way. (Read John 21:1–3.)

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberias,
and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin),
Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others
of his disciples were together. 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.

It was a guy thing. Fishing had been the career of several disciples before they met Jesus. For them, going fishing was a return to the familiar, to what was comfortable. When life is up in the air, guys tend to bury themselves in their work. We may look like we don’t care, when in reality we are simply searching for a way to get back to what’s normal.

Just as the sun came up, Jesus called out from the beach, “Do you have any fish?” The answer was no. They had fished all night and caught nothing. All night? Really? But that, too, is a guy thing! Some call it stubbornness. Others call it determination. Either way the nets are empty.
The disciples didn’t recognize the Lord, even when he asked, “Catch anything?” So Jesus told them, “Cast your nets on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” To experienced fishermen it made no sense. That time of day. That place. There would be no fish there then. But it’s a God thing. He often asks us to do what is counterintuitive.

Surprisingly they did as he said. Their nets hit the water and BAM; those nets were so full they had trouble pulling them in. That, too, is a God thing. He loves to fill what is empty. (Read John 21:6–7.)

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.

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.

Peter was stripped for work. What can I say? It’s a guy thing. Guys like working shirtless and working up a good sweat. Now, why does a guy then put on his clothes only to jump into the water? What can I say? A guy thing.

When the rest of the disciples landed on the beach, they saw that the Lord had breakfast waiting for them—he had built a charcoal fire and was grilling some fish. He had bread for them, too. Ahhh—a fire on the beach! Breakfast was welcome after a hard night’s work. Truly a guy thing.

But something else is going on. John 21:9 calls attention to a “charcoal fire.” That phrase occurs only twice in the entire New Testament, once here and once on the night Jesus was on trial for his life. That was the night Peter denied knowing Jesus. That night, too, Peter found himself sitting near a charcoal fire.

Smells have an interesting way of evoking memories. As Peter smells the smoke from this morning’s breakfast fire, the shame comes rushing up. Jesus knows this. The Lord is not looking for an opportunity to rebuke Peter, but rather to restore him—to make things right again.

Jesus tells the disciples to bring some of the fish they have caught, so Peter and the others haul the net ashore. It’s full of large fish, 153 of them, the Bible says (John 21:10–11) . . . 153. They counted them! Yep—keeping score, counting, and always measuring. A guy thing.

Then Jesus invites them, “Come and have breakfast.” This is better than a Grand Slam at Denny’s! Breakfast on the beach with Jesus. Not many days before they had let him down so hard, and now with such kindness, he says, “Let’s have breakfast.”

Kindness like this is a God thing. He does the same with you today. In the midst of your failures, when memories stir up shame, your Savior invites you to sit down with him. (Read John 21:15.)

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.”

What is Jesus asking here? I don’t think he is pointing to the fish. So recently, Peter had boasted that if everyone else fell away, he never would. He was filled with such bravado and such confidence. This, too, is a guy thing.

Now Jesus is seeking to restore him, but first he must gently humble Peter with the question, “Do
you love me more than these?” Three times Jesus asks the question. He is not looking to grind Peter down. But in kindness, Jesus seeks to cover Peter’s three-time denial, to make it possible for Peter to live up to the nickname Jesus had given him, Peter—the “Rock.”

The night before Jesus died, he had said this to Peter (Luke 22:31–32):

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,
but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.
And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Peter would be the steady one, the rock to whom the other disciples would turn in times of trouble after Jesus’ ascension. But before that could happen, Peter needed to be certain of his position, certain of the Lord’s forgiveness. So here, at the charcoal fire with all the memories that fire was evoking, Jesus is giving Peter a second chance, a do over. In golf, we call it a mulligan. Guys love mulligans. In golf scrambles, they pay for extra mulligans on the course. Hook one into the woods, a mulligan lets you play it over.

Despite the repeated denials, Jesus invites Peter—and you and me, anyone who falls or shanks one into the woods—to start over. Why? It’s a God thing. It’s all about grace. (Reread Micah 6:8.)

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and what does the LORD require of you
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Peter saw and experienced this verse in the flesh as Jesus humbly and kindly sought to make things right again. Jesus is the friend who kindled a fire—not only on the beach, but in Peter’s heart.

Taking It Home

For use on Father’s Day I give thanks to our Father in heaven for your godly example here at church, in our community, and especially in your home. As you leave today, we have a small gift for you (name the item). I pray it encourages you in your walk with the Lord and strengthens you in your service to him.

For use at a retreat or men’s work day As we leave one another today, you will receive (name the gift being given to all men present). You are a blessing in who you are and what you do in Jesus’ name. I pray this gift encourages you in every “guy thing” you do and that you will never cease to be amazed at the God things he is doing through you.