

Epilogue Sign-Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish John 21:1-14

Introduction to the reading

After the resurrection of Jesus the Lord had appeared to his disciples twice in Jerusalem behind locked doors. During these meetings, one with Thomas and one without, he bestowed his peace upon them and commissioned them as his apostles in his place as his messengers or sent ones, breathing on them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, anticipating what would happen 50 days later on Pentecost. They had also been told by Jesus himself before his crucifixion that he was going ahead of them and then after, via Mary Magdalene, that they were to go to Galilee to a mountain where they would see Jesus and he would ascend to be with the Father [Matthew 26:32; 28:7,10,16]. The disciples had journeyed north to Galilee and were now waiting, but not on the mountainside. Perhaps they were penniless and hungry so came down.

John 21:1-14

Have you ever been in a situation where you have been given a very clear directive from God, whether it be from reading and hearing the Word and knowing that you have to apply a specific command or teaching to your own life circumstance whereby you're required to commit to live, work, or serve in a particular way? Or, that you know through prayer, wisdom, a word of discernment or prophecy that you are to follow a particular course of action as per the Lord's specific leading? You then start out in obedience but eventually you find that because you are waiting for something to happen or for the word to be fulfilled that impatience begins to creep in and grow so in yourself you think about how you might just hurry things along by your own strength, power and self-determination, or, you become distracted by other things in the meantime and forget about what it is that that Lord had commanded you to do? If this is you, then as a follower of Christ, you are not alone today or even back then and there with some of the big names of Christian faith that appear in our bible story today, which is the Epilogue Sign of John's Gospel of the Miraculous Catch of Fish [which results in Jesus' invitation to his disciples of "Come and have breakfast."]

Well, they made it to Galilee but then it was a case of "I am going fishing" Simon Peter told his fellow disciples to whom they replied, "We'll go with you". In other words their collaborative approach to going hungry while waiting on the mountain by the Sea of Galilee for their Lord Jesus to appear was "Let's Go Fishing!"

Sometimes we fall back on what we want or what is comfortable rather than waiting on God just as in when a child runs away, you will generally find them in one of their old haunts, a place that they know and are comfortable with, now back to our story. Is fishing wrong?

It is if Jesus told them to wait on the mountain. Even if it is a majority decision with seven out of eleven saying “We are going!” When you think about it, what began as Peter’s impatience leads others to stumble. This is because disobedience just loves company. The reason why is that ‘company’ makes you feel less guilty when we surround ourselves with people who are on about the same level as we are. If we are right with God, we want to be around others who are right with God. If we are out of God’s will, we feel rebuked by the lives of those who are living for the Lord so we seek out those who are like we are. Sadly, we will often try to reproduce our own spiritual temperature in the lives of those who are close to us. This is merely an effort to make ourselves more comfortable by being around people who will only tell us what it is that we want to hear. So Peter in this group of seven had decided while they were waiting around in Galilee as per the command that he had to do something as their leader. So he simply reverts to what he did in the years previous to Jesus- fishing. And all the fisherman disciples join him. It had been over three years since Jesus had called him away from his fishing business in Galilee to follow him and along with the other disciples follow Jesus in order to become ‘fishers of men’ Matthew 4:19.

Jesus’ relationship with these disciples began in Luke 5:1-11 with a miraculous catch of fish. They meet him in the miracle. And the same is about to happen at the end of their relationship on earth. So there are lessons to be learned from this story, and the first is this:

It is important to **Obey Jesus because obedience brings blessing.**

Vv1-6 He tested their obedience so that they could learn that blessings follow obedience. The seven got in the boat and did not catch anything all night. Herein is the problem. Jesus did not call them to catch fish anymore; He called them to catch men! Failure makes it obvious. They hadn’t waited on the mountain, they’d chosen to go fishing, but Jesus could still teach them the lesson of blessing.

In your relationship with God, real success follows obedience, even when what he is asking you to do seems ridiculous to you. The truth of the matter is that You and I are not smarter than God. You can’t keep doing the same things and expect different results. You can’t rebel against God, go against what he is telling you, and expect success.

You can't do all the wrong things and expect good things to happen. It doesn't happen that way. Success will always come, as you and I are willing to listen to Jesus and do what he says. This involves humility.

The disciples were both professional fishermen and Jesus' closest friends. They knew all about fishing and a lot about Jesus. The funny thing is they could not recognise Jesus 90 metres away on the shore when he called out, even though they were to be expecting him.

I suppose it was the early morning and they were probably tired and hungry after a night's focused fishing.

Shouldn't they have been expecting Him?

How many times has Jesus passed by and you missed recognising Him because you were doing your own thing and not waiting on Him?

When Jesus called out "Friends", the NIV is putting it nicely because it is more like "Hey boys! "Children" Caught anything?" Their quick and honest answer "NO!" is an admittance of their failure and also their need. "Try the other side and you will!" Here is the command coupled with a promise. They do and they pull in so many fish that they can't pull the net into the boat.

So the seven had to be humble enough to do what the stranger Jesus on the shore said, rather than trusting what they had personally learned about fishing. It was not just what they had learned through experience, it is what their fathers and grandfathers before them had learned and taught them. What he was asking them to do did not seem that different from what they had been doing all night. It was not so much something different as more of the same. But when it comes to following God, you can't give up. And you can't always rely on your knowledge and training. Jesus wants us to have a teachable spirit. I am convinced that having a teachable spirit is one of the most important characteristics that you can have in life. There are some people who you can't tell them anything, because they think they already know it all. They don't want the benefit of anyone else's wisdom or advice. They don't want to hear it and so they never learn.

In order to follow Christ you have to have humility and a willing spirit. King David can teach us this from his prayer as a contrite sinner in Psalm 51:10-12 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a **willing spirit**, to sustain me" As a Christian believer you have to be **willing** to listen to Jesus and **do what he says**.

Upon the completion of doing what they'd been told and the result of their large haul, the realisation of who is on the shore sets in and they respond by making the effort to **Follow Jesus without hesitation vv7-8** John is the first to realise that it is Jesus and says to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter puts on his outer clothing and jumps into the water and wades to shore. Both respond immediately in their own way and according to their personality. John has great spiritual discernment and comes to a swift realisation like at the tomb and Peter, ever impulsive, jumps in the water! The Body of Christ needs servant followers of all kinds, and instruments of every sorts, Peters as well as Johns.

v. 8 So Peter jumps in and wades to shore while the rest follow in the boat. Peter did not hesitate to follow Jesus this time. Last time in John 18 he followed at a distance and denied, but this time he is literally all in! When you see Jesus, you should quickly join Him in what He is doing! Work alongside Him for we are God's fellow workers as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 3:9, co-workers in God's Service. Lastly,

Jesus invites us into relationship providing for our needs vv 9-14

Jesus had already made the preparation for relationship and an important conversation He needed to have with Peter.

Let's look at what was prepared, "a fire of burning coals". This is not something you find lying around like wood so Jesus is quite intentional preparing this breakfast. It is the same with relationships because they involve intentionality. It requires work. And I wonder if Peter is not experiencing a bit of déjà vu here. Remember the last time he was near a coal fire which are mentioned only twice in the New Testament.

John 18:18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire [of coals] they had made to keep warm. Peter was also standing with them warming himself.

It was at a coal fire that he denied Jesus the third and final time and now it is at another coal fire that the relationship will be repaired, along with "fish and bread". Not only is a fire provided for warmth, but Jesus also provides food. There is fish and toast awaiting them. That for which they had worked hard all night long, Jesus had already prepared! He supplied what they needed and lacked.

For what are you striving, struggling, and working hard? Perhaps if you would wait on God, He will provide it. He will also invite you to bring what you have into the relationship as well, just as he did the disciples when he said v.10 "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." He invites them to share in this meal and relationship by bringing what they have.

Jesus prepares and presents breakfast, but invites the disciples to participate. He invites us as well. Bring what you have so He can use it for His glory as you share in the relationship!

So eager beaver Peter then goes and drags in the net full of fish v.10. They count the fish and there are 153 and miraculously the net did not break or tear. The personality of John comes through here. As a fisherman, the count was important. Some through the ages have tried to find symbolism in the number, but sometimes a number is just a number when you are in a joint fishing venture and have to know how to divide the profits. Then with the counting done Jesus invites the disciples to “Come and eat.” What a great word! Jesus invites them to fellowship with Him even as He does at the close of human history in the book of Revelation. “Come!” There is invitation! He does the same for us. “Here I am, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

Revelation 3:20

vv.13-14 Without question the disciples immediately accept the invitation. Jesus serves them breakfast as the host. There is more than a hint of the sacramental fellowship they had with him in the Upper Room at the Passover Supper. And as this would also point us to communion, the Lord’s Supper that we are about to partake in where we celebrate Christ’s dying for our sins, resurrection from the dead and the fact that he is coming again. John reminds us that this is the third time Jesus has appeared to some portion of the disciples as a group after his resurrection – a great reminder that he is real and Alive!

Conclusion:

I will finish by saying, no matter where you are at in your relationship with God, no matter how far you think you are from him, Jesus is always there on the shore, waiting for you to not just recognise him, but to acknowledge and return to him. He is waiting with a comforting fire, warm food, and affirming wisdom and direction for your life. So,

The Challenge then remains for each of us:

1. Will you obey?

Because obedience brings the blessing of God into our lives.

2. Will you follow? Jesus without hesitation to join him in his work as a co-worker when you recognise him and what he is doing in your world?

John reminds us that Jesus came to establish relationship and that is to what He invites us so the final challenge is

3. Will you accept Jesus' invitation?

To enter a relationship where he provides for all your needs!