

The Word Became Flesh
Week 64
John 21:1-14
"The Catch"

Introduction

"....God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable."

Romans 11:29

After The LORD appeared to Thomas and the rest of the disciples, some time goes by before He makes yet another appearance. The timing of God is always perfect, even when we cannot begin to understand His ways. Jesus had commanded His disciples to leave Jerusalem and return to the region of Galilee (**Matthew 28:10**). It was there that they were supposed to await The LORD'S coming to them. More than likely, they would have been all too eager to comply with this command for they were in fear for their lives while they were abiding in Jerusalem. Not to mention, going to Galilee meant going home, home to see their families, and to be near to those who knew them well.

While they were there Peter made the decision to return to his former fishing business. One thing we know in regards to Simon Peter's nature, he was not the kind of guy to just sit around and patiently wait. No, Peter was impetuous and a man of action. Perhaps he just could not stand the idea of sitting idly by, or maybe the group was low on funds. These are some of the possibilities that might have spurred him into action. But whatever the reason, waiting upon The LORD was suspended and a fishing trip was planned. Fortunately no matter where we wander, Christ always knows exactly where to find us!

Here in this final chapter of John's gospel, the "prologue" if you will, we are made a participant in Peter's fateful fishing trip. When the rugged fisherman announced that he was headed to the sea, several of his fellow disciples decided to go along. We are told that Thomas, James, John, Nathaniel, and two unnamed disciples joined Peter in the boat. The two unnamed men are more than likely Andrew, Simon's brother and Philip who was a close friend of Nathaniel. But we can only speculate. I heard one pastor say that perhaps these two disciples who joined in this wayward journey are unnamed so that we can fill our own names in the blank, when we wander away from the commands of Christ!

One thing is for certain, there is not many things more frustrating than fishing when there are no fish! The night was nothing like the disciples had hoped for. It was a complete and utter failure. No doubt after these men had fished all night long, they were irritable and exhausted as the morning sun broke the horizon and began to raise the fog from the sea of Galilee. Anyone who has ever worked the night shift knows exactly how tired you become when you are headed home with the morning sun shining in your windshield. I doubt very seriously these men were in the greatest of moods that fateful morning. But an encounter with the risen Christ will always chase away the fog of doubt and discouragement!

Little did these weary fishermen know that the morning was about to go from dreary to wonderful. For The Savior was waiting upon the shore.

Sing to The LORD, you His faithful ones, and praise His holy Name. For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor, a lifetime. Weeping may stay overnight, but there is joy in the morning.
Psalm 30:4-5

So let us look together at this beautiful passage that tells the story of futility turned to fruitfulness, from lonely discouragement to joyous fellowship. And let us learn together that when God calls us, He calls us forever. He will never leave us, even when we wander off the course that He has set us upon. This is a story of restoration and peace. Let us join in with the disciples on the shores of Galilee and experience with them the spiritual realities of fellowship with The Risen Christ: *The Calling, The Catch, and The Communion.*

The Calling (vs. 1-5)

After this, Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called "Twin"), Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples were together. "I'm going fishing," Simon Peter said to them. "We're coming with you," they told him. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. "Friends," Jesus called to them, "you don't have any fish, do you?" "No," they answered.

As noted in the introduction, Jesus had commanded His disciples to wait for Him on a specific mountain in Galilee. But instead of waiting, Peter decided to go back to his old life. He would have been a great proponent of the old adage, "Don't just stand there, do something!" But it is more often than not that God is saying to us, "*Don't just do something, stand there!*" It is by waiting on The LORD that we find the best paths to travel. Or as The Scripture has said:

Be silent before The LORD and wait expectantly for Him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the person who carries out evil plans. Psalm 37:7

Have you ever acted out impetuously, and then lived to regret it? I hate to use myself as a sermon illustration, but I did that very thing just this week. I was placed in a situation that was pretty unbearable for me, and rather than pray my way through it and wait for The LORD to guide my steps, I reacted in foolish anger. It wasn't the first time I have ever done so, and it probably won't be the last, but it is always regretful for me, when I let my own flesh do the leading instead of The Holy Spirit. One way to never have to say your sorry, is to always take the time to hear from God before you act or speak. Can I get a witness, or am I the only one who struggles with this from time to time?

Another mistake that Peter made by not waiting for The Savior was in thinking that he could just go back to his old way of life after Jesus had called him to something new! The first time that Jesus called Simon to follow Him, Peter was also on a fishing boat. In fact, the two stories are so very similar that it has to be more than mere coincidence.

As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, He was standing by Lake Gennesaret. He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then He sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

"Master," Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets." When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!" For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners. "Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people." Luke 5:1-10

So what is the point I am trying to make? When Christ calls a person to leave their old life and to follow Him, they can never return to their old life again. When Jesus called Simon, he had just experienced a terrible unsuccessful night of fishing, and Jesus blessed him with a great catch. Then He beckoned the fisherman to leave that life behind to become fishers of men. And Peter followed. But after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Peter tried to go back to the life that he had used to live. And once again, he was unfruitful in his endeavors. This story begins and ends with the exact same results.

I love Jesus' words to them from the shore, **"Friends, you don't have any fish... do you?"** The word there for "friends" actually means "boys". It was not only a term of endearment, but it should have also served as a reminder of the immaturity that led them to set out on their own in the first place. They should have remembered The LORD'S words just days before in the upper room:

"Apart from Me, you can do nothing." **John 15:5**

When God calls you, His calling is irrevocable. You can never go back to your old life and bear any lasting fruit. When Christ changes your heart, it cannot be *"unchanged"*. Jesus came to the shores of Galilee that faithful morning to remind His disciples of this spiritual reality.

The Catch (vs. 6-11)

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat," He told them, "and you'll find some." So they did, and they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish. The disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer clothing around him (for he had taken it off) and plunged into the sea. Since they were not far from land (about a hundred yards away), the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread. "Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus told them. So Simon Peter climbed up and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish — 153 of them. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

As mentioned before, the similarities between this great haul of fish and the one found in **Luke Chapter 5** are remarkable. All night long Jesus, the Master of the sea, had caused the fish to elude Peter's nets. He did this for a reason. These men were about to be sent upon a great fishing trip to catch men. It was for this reason, and this reason alone, that they had been called and set apart in the first place. And apart from Christ's will, they would never catch as single one. You cannot do ministry in the flesh. No one will ever be genuinely saved due to the great skill of the preacher. It is only by The Spirit that anyone will ever be drawn into the nets of the kingdom.

We can also see here the different kinds of men that God uses to do His will. John immediately perceived that it was The LORD who had spoken to them. And Peter, just as soon as John told him Who it was, couldn't wait for the boat to slowly reach the shore. He covered himself and jumped headlong into the water to swim to shore. Both men deeply loved The LORD, but see how they approached Him in different ways. Thank God that no two Christians are alike. We all have our strengths and weaknesses, our own perspectives and approaches. But we all are called to come to the Savior. And to bring along our "catch" with us. We too have been called to catch men.

When John and the others finally rowed to shore, towing their nets alongside, Peter went down to the waters edge and dragged out the nets by himself! This was a very strong man indeed. Is it any wonder that Christ had chosen him to be the leader and protector of these men, once The LORD had ascended to heaven. Jesus knows just who to call to lead, and he knows just who to call to follow. But neither can do anything without Him. They all caught fish, because The LORD had brought the fish to *them!* And they, in turn, brought them to *Him!*

The Communion (vs. 12-14)

“Come and have breakfast.” Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.

I love this verse! Jesus invites His followers to come and dine with Him! And John tells us that in His presence no one dared to question His identity. They knew exactly Who He was and is! He broke the bread and gave them the strength and nourishment they needed after a long laborious night upon the waves. Have you ever had Jesus give you just what you needed in the moment you needed it most. I get really discouraged sometimes, in fact, I got pretty discouraged this week! But Christ never leaves us empty and afraid. He always has just what we need to get up and make one more run.

Those disciples were exhausted, famished, and discouraged. And then that familiar voice from the shore cuts through the thick morning fog and beckons, “Come and dine.” When we sit at His feet and He feeds us, we too know His presence. No one who has ever been refreshed by The Savior has to stop and think Who it is that is giving us His strength and encouragement.

“My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all.” **John 10:27-29**

It is important to note that Jesus is feeding these men, and soon afterward, He will be sending them out to preach the gospel. There is an important spiritual truth for us here. You cannot have anything to offer this lost world until you have sat down at the feet of Christ and been fed by Him yourself! He is the One, Who gives us what we need in order to become fishers of men. Without a regular feasting upon His Word, we have nothing with which to draw the net! Make it a regular occurrence in your life to spend the required amount of time at the feet of Jesus being fed by His Word, and you will bear fruit, or in this analogy, you will catch fish!

I mentioned earlier that these two accounts of the disciples first calling, and their final calling, are very similar. But there is one stark difference. In their first calling, the nets began to tear apart when the disciples hauled their great catch ashore (**Luke 5:6**), but here at their “re-call” if you will, the nets held firm, even with such a massive haul of fish.

At times, in the ministry, we feel like our nets are tearing, and so many fish are slipping away. But rest assured, at the end of all things, every true fish will be caught and accounted for. God’s nets will hold fast. Those who are saved will be kept saved. You do not keep Him, but rather He keeps you! So answer the call of God. Come ashore from the storms of life, where all is futile, and become fishers of men. And always remember to maintain your communion with the Savior, and your supply will never run dry. So come in from the tempestuous and frustrating seas of this world to the safe harbor that is Christ Jesus, that you may have life. Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus.....and live!

Let the fishers of men all say...truth!!!