**PRAY**

In the last chapter of John’s Gospel we are shown some examples of Jesus pastoral ministry – no doubt things that He had been doing for the years beforehand as well.

We are told that He continued to show Himself to His disciples and in this case seven of the remaining eleven were present, having returned to the familiarity of the Sea of Galilee.

It is important to remember that they went to Galilee because Jesus told them to **Matthew 28:7, 10**. They weren’t running from responsibility or because of fear – they were exactly where Jesus wanted them to be.

Once again Peter was at the top of a list of the disciples – maybe Peter was placed first as, by the time John was writing, Peter had emerged as the leader of the believers in Jesus.

We are also told amongst the group who went out to fish were **two other disciples**. This is an annoying lack of detail if you want to know everything, but equally, isn’t it great to know even amongst the disciples there were those who quietly did their work, without being humanly recognised.

Never doubt that God is watching your every action. Whilst you may be unnamed to the world, to God you are a faithful servant doing His will.

Peter sates that he is **going fishing**. There is a debate whether he was wrong to do so – was he trying to restart a former occupation in an act of compromise, or maybe he was taking advantage of a night without anything else on, to do something that he loved doing.

I’m not going to enter that debate in anyway beyond saying that we don’t know what Peter was thinking, so we can’t judge further. But if he was taking time out whilst waiting on His Lord to come, there is nothing wrong in that.

Jesus said that He wants us to have life and live it to the full **John 10:10** – that includes doing things that we enjoy. God wants us to enjoy our earthly life and we can still honour Him and praise Him in doing the things that we enjoy – as long as God is not removed from His rightful place at the centre.

Whatever Peter’s motivation for going fishing, the group **caught nothing**. That was probably a depressing situation, along with being cold, tired and hungry.

Spurgeon, however, took encouragement from Peter’s disappointment. He said, ‘to be a fisherman, a man must expect disappointments; he must often cast the net and bring up nothing but weeds.’ A servant ‘of Christ …must in faith continue in prayer and labour, expecting that at the end he shall receive his reward.’

The disciples reward came in the morning, form the stranger who called to them from the shore. We don’t know why they didn’t recognise Him, but He was there nevertheless – showing an interest in their work.

God is interested in you – in your whole life – not just the time you spend with Hi at church, or in prayer or study times. God’s interest extends beyond the attendance at religious services, His interest is also within the common or everyday things of your life.

He wants to bring His support and His miraculous provision into every aspect of your life – and He was about to do that for those disciples.

Jesus calls **Friends, haven’t you any fish**. It has been said that the Greek word translated here as friends, could equally have been translated as ‘lads’. Jesus was calling in a relaxed way, acting as someone willing to buy their fish.

But they hadn’t caught anything, so they told the stranger as much.

Jesus’ response that they should **cast the net on the right side of the boat** may seem strange.

There appears no logical reason why:

* fishing in the morning light would be better than fishing at night.
* fishing on one side of the boat would be better than the other side.

It wasn’t even directly a test of trust in Jesus, because they did not know it was Him until the fish were caught. Maybe this was a test of their ability to find the guidance of God in small and unsuspected ways – such as a stranger calling out fishing instructions from the shore.

This does, however, illustrate that we should never be afraid to change our method, as long as it is at the direction of Jesus.

But on this occasion, **they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish**.

Although the disciples didn’t know it was Jesus giving them instructions, the result was a success beyond their expectation - this shows a difference between doing work with and without Divine guidance.

It was undoubtedly a great miracle but note that the miracle and God’s work includes everything – the worker, his tools and his skills or gifts.

Spurgeon pointed out, ‘…perhaps, if they had not fished at night, Christ would not have given them fish in the day-time. He does not often come to bless idlers; he acts sovereignly …but he generally gives his blessing to those churches that do the most for him.’

I am sure Spurgeon would have extended that statement to individuals as well – those who do God’s work, at His timing and in His place, will receive the greater blessing.

It is at this point that John, the writer, recognises the stranger for who he is - **It is the Lord** – but it is Peter who jumps overboard in order to get ashore quickly. For Peter, the route to Jesus was too slow – he was eager to be with his Saviour.

Sometimes, just being close to the Lord calls for all your attention. The other work on this occasion would have to be done by others.

I am not suggesting this as a spiritual work ethic, but Peter shows us here that his focus was completely on the Lord and there is no criticism of that.

When everyone lands, they see a fire, with a breakfast of bread and fish already cooking.

Jesus’ first coming was as a servant and here He continues to serve His friends with a warm fire – for a wet Peter – and fish cooking for breakfast. It is worthy of note that Jesus already had food for them, even before the great catch.

Whatever you bring to the Lord, He will use it and you will add to His supply, but remember you are merely adding to His provision, not supplying it.

On being told by Jesus to bring some more fish, Peter returns to the boat and **dragged the net ashore.** For once, I think we can trust a fisherman as we are told they were large and there were 153 of them.

Why 153? That has given rise to much speculation over the centuries, to which I will not distract you with, suffice to say that the only truth we know is that 153 represents the number of fish in the unbroken net.

If you have trusted in Jesus for your salvation, your God is a God of the miraculous.

It has been said, ‘Peter never landed a haul of fish without counting them and John, fisherman as he was, could never forget the number of his largest takes.’ (Dods)

Jesus commands His disciples to **come and have breakfast**. Now everyone present knew who had invited them to eat, there was no need to clarify, there was no doubt in their minds.

Throughout the gospels there have been invitations to come:

* To see **John 1:39**
* To learn **Matthew 11:28-29**
* To rest **Mark 6:31**
* To dine **John 21:12)**
* To inherit **Matthew 25:34-36**

Those invitations are important – they are issued by our Sovereign creator, who is inviting you to spend eternity with Him. There can be no greater honour than accepting that invitation. There can be no greater failure than to reject that same request.

That invitation remains open for every single person today, but time is clearly running out – by looking at the world around us, we should recognise that we are in days that mirror the events that Jesus spoke of in **Matthew 24**.

That is not to worry you. Jesus did not tell us about such events to scare us, He did it to prepare us, that we might be ready for His return.

When He does return, there will be no need to clarify who He is – every person on this planet will both see Him and recognise Him as the Son of God.

For those disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, maybe it was because they could see Jesus’ scars, or maybe it was because Jesus was instantly recognisable for who He was – the Son of God. There was no doubt.

Maybe it was in the command to eat. In that simple meal of bread and fish, there is a real sense of belonging – a restoration of a relationship lost to sin in the Garden of Eden. It is a picture of intimate, friendly fellowship.

In that meal, those disciples could consider Jesus as the same God who Paul described as One who will meet all your needs **Philippians 4:19**. God has not changed – He still can and will supply everything that you ever will need to be close to Him.

**PRAYER / OFFER**

**JOHN 21:1-14**

**Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: 2Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3“I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.**

**4Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. 5He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. 6He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.**

**7Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. 8The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.**

**9When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. 10Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” 11So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.**

**12Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. 13Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.**

**PHILIPPIANS 4:10-20**

**10I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

**14Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.**

**18I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

**20To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**