

## John 21

### SCENE 1 – MIRACULOUS CATCH

7 disciples back home in Galilee. Assume unnamed 2 are Andrew and Philip.

NB Thomas sticking with them now, not isolated.

Peter: "I am going fishing."

The other 6: "We will go with you". Likely they were also fishermen.

What's going on?

"Never has a fishing trip been so severely judged." B-M

- Received Spirit and Commissioning (20.21-23)
- Are done with preaching, given up and returned to the old life?

NO!

- Had been told to go and wait in Galilee (Mk 14.28; 16.7)
- What else were they meant to do?
- Jesus has risen, but still needed to eat!

Experienced fishermen fishing all night... Caught nothing - zilch.

Daybreak: Jesus directs them "lads" (from the land) ... That is a miracle!

Reminiscent of what happened when Peter, James and John were called – Luke 5.1-11, except then their nets did break, but not here.

As at the tomb, it is John who has the spiritual insight, Peter who rushes in.

John: "It is the Lord."

"When Simon Peter *heard* that it was the Lord...and threw himself into the sea." (90 metres from land)

In Luke 5 the response of Peter was to fall down in awe, overcome by his own sinfulness.

### 1<sup>st</sup> LESSONS

Carson: They are coming to grips with the resurrection, but they still have not learned the profound truth that apart from Christ they can do nothing (15.5).

- had all the fishing know how but caught nothing
- But when did what Jesus directed caught more than they could manage.  
So it is with evangelism. Compare West with 2/3 world.

Call reaffirmed – to catch men for Jesus.

## SCENE 2 – THE AWKWARD BREAKFAST

Charcoal fire with fish and bread laid out on it. Jesus feeds them (again) – Ch. 6

But also says “Bring some of the fish you have just caught” Jesus cooks and feeds them this time, but they have something to contribute.

No obvious significance to 153. But points to eye witness account and large catch, obviously a miracle.

Jesus acts the role of the father of the household, taking the bread, <giving thanks for it> and then giving it out.

Must have taken them back to ch. 6 and bread of life discourse that followed, at end of which Jesus asks if they too want to abandon him, and Peter says “Lord, to whom shall we go?...”

PURPOSE: sets the scene for what follows with Peter, incl. charcoal fire. Another painful reminder of Peter’s 3x denial (Jn 18.19ff.)

## SCENE 3 – FIRESIDE TALK REINSTATING PETER

The elephant is in the room/on the beach!

Peter knows that he has relinquished any right to be called Jesus’ disciple, let alone the rock on which his church would be built, by his denial that he had any association with him, or even knew him.

Jesus sets about restoring Peter, but does so in what seems a brutal way

- Publicly. Necessary because Peter needs to be seen by those he will be leading to be restored
- Direct: a heart work, going to the heart of the issue: do you love me? (no significance to variation of words as variation typical of John (3 words for fish and 2 for sheep and feeding/tending)
- Addresses him as “Simon son of John”, not “Peter”

First time: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” –

- than the other disciples, OR
- than the other disciples love Jesus OR
- nets/fishing – or
- all 3?

The first, in the light of Mark 14.29; Matt 26.33

Threefold questioning was surely a deliberate searching of Peter's heart. Are you *sure* that you love me? You know what that means?

Central = that Peter's ministry must be rooted in, and driven by, love. Love for Jesus and care for his sheep. Love was what drove God's mission through Jesus (3.16), Paul's mission (2 Cor 5.14) and must drive Peter's (and ours). Jesus loved his own to the very end (13.1).

love is inseparable from responsibility and sacrifice.

Also important is that the lambs/sheep/flock is Jesus', not Peter's.

Peter had been given primacy among the disciples, and in Luke's Gospel where Jesus says he will pray for Peter he says "And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22.32)

Peter is now called from fishing to shepherding, and from shame/disgrace/failure to leadership as shepherd.

That will be costly, just as it was for Jesus.

Peter's manner of death is indicated: execution by crucifixion, by which he would glorify God. Cf. last week: like Christ, Christians may best be recognised by their wounds/scars. When Jesus says "follow me", is also referring to "follow me to the cross." Cf. Carracci's *Domine, Quo Vadis?*

In fulfilment of 13.36 – "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

Jesus seems to give Peter an assurance he would do; that is implied (cf. 13.36f.). Peter wouldn't deny him again. We see Peter preaching boldly in the face of opposition almost immediately (Acts 5.27-29)  
And after saying this to him he said "Follow me"

LESSON: a true relationship with Jesus as his disciple cannot begin apart from the addressing of sin. Jesus hurts Peter (v.17) but must do so to restore him. Peter preaches this as his basic message in Acts 2.37-38.

The critical question for all disciples then is: Do you love me? This is the ultimate question.... Not why did you let me down? The issue have to ask when “hurt by the church” is not can I belong to the church, but do I still love Jesus? If answer is yes, then must follow him wherever he calls, and that will be as part of the church. Surely not as bad as crucifixion!

In this time of crisis ministers/pastors are being asked a multitude of questions: how we are using technology to connect with people, support them, finance the church etc. But we too should have uppermost: how is this affecting our, and our people’s, relationship with Jesus?

Jesus has already defined what makes a good shepherd – “lays down his life for the sheep” 10.11, and 15.13.

#### **SCENE FOUR 20-23**

John is also “following”

We learnt in 13.34 that Peter had motioned for John to ask Jesus who would betray him, presumably because he thought Jesus most likely to share this with John (of all the disciples, being closest to him). Peter went to Jesus through the beloved disciple. Here now he is going straight to Jesus *about* the beloved disciple.

The author seems to be wanting to remind us not only of what Jesus said about himself, but of his special relationship with Jesus. At the same time there is no attempt to denigrate Peter. Both have special, but different roles.

By the time the Gospel is in circulation both disciples have died. The concern therefore is not to put one above the other but to affirm the importance of both. Cf. rivalries in 1 Cor 3.3-4.

Peter is rebuked for asking about John’s fate. That is not his concern. Jesus is sovereign and calls each of us to different tasks. We have only to be faithful in our calling., not worry about others.

Peter got a new start by the shore of Galilee.... Are there parallels for us as we return to work and worship after lockdown? What has God been saying to us/you?

### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. Were the disciples wrong to have gone fishing? How does Jesus respond to their actions?
2. How do you behave when you get 'down' about your spiritual life, or when your walk with the Lord or church life seems to be flat?
3. Have you ever done (or not done) something which has left you feeling that you have failed the Lord? How did you feel and respond? How did he respond?
4. What do we learn about God, and about pastoral ministry, from the way Jesus rehabilitated Peter? How does this differ from worldly thinking about addressing sin and failure?
5. What does it mean to tend and feed Jesus' sheep? How did Peter do this? (you might like to have a quick look at the subjects of his 2 epistles)
6. What do we learn from the final scene when Peter questions what will happen to John?