

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

John 21 vs 1-14
Sunday 10th May 2020

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ² Simon 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.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. ⁶ He 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. ⁷ Then 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. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹ So 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. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

'What now?' That was the burning question facing Peter and the other disciples. I'm sure we can all relate to that today. They had left their jobs to follow Jesus. They had experienced the agony of deserting him, and in Peter's case betraying him, and then watching him die. They had lived through shame and grief, fear and confusion, hiding away together. They had experienced the panic of the apparent removal and disappearance of Jesus' body; they had been overcome with joy and awe as they saw the risen Lord Jesus. It wasn't quite the same as before though. Jesus didn't stay with them in the same way. He kept appearing, even behind locked doors, but then he also disappeared. 'What now?' they must have thought, 'What happens now? What are we supposed to do?' Emotionally, psychologically, they were exhausted and still uncertain. It was Peter who suggested fishing, something familiar, something he knew and maybe felt he had some control over, something which might ground him and give him purpose. Some of the disciples – even one or two who weren't fishermen by trade – were happy to go with Peter, to have something to do, to shelve the question of 'what now?' for the moment. I'm sure that Peter thought the fishing trip would bring some sense of purpose, of achievement, of success; after all he knew his trade, he knew the night was the best time to fish, he knew what he was doing. As dawn broke the failure of their trip became obvious – they had caught nothing. They were exhausted, hungry, disappointed, fed up; the fishing trip which had promised so much had only exacerbated

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their confusion and uncertainty and for Peter it was even more difficult. He had come fishing to remember what he was good at, who he was. Yes, Jesus was alive and it was amazing, but Peter couldn't forget that he had betrayed Jesus, he had let his Master down when he needed him the most and he hadn't had the chance to talk to Jesus about it; he wasn't quite sure where he stood with Jesus. 'What now?' was the question Peter kept asking over and over again and this fishing trip had compounded his sense of failure. 'What now?' had never felt so important or so confusing and Peter had no more answers and no more strength. Yet, amazingly, it is into this moment that Jesus speaks.

What does Jesus say? He simply asks them 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' and then tells them where to throw their nets so they can catch so many fish that they are unable to haul the net in. In the middle of Peter's exhaustion, in the middle of his questions of 'what now?' Jesus steps in; Jesus tells him what to do so that the fishing trip is transformed from failure into miracle, he reminds them that he is the One who has authority over nature – the One who calmed the storm is able to provide fish in extravagant abundance, he calls them 'friends', re-establishing their relationship. The stranger on the shore is revealed to be their risen Lord and as John recognises him, Peter can no longer contain himself, jumping into the water to get to Jesus as quickly as he can. Peter may think he is ready for that chat with Jesus, but Jesus recognises what is needed first – food! He has already prepared a fire and a breakfast of fish and bread and the disciples, helped by Peter, drag their net ashore (full of so many fish they had to count them!), bring some fish as Jesus suggested and accept his invitation to 'come and have breakfast'.

This lockdown has been different for all of us. Some of us have been in busy family homes with lots of noise and little space; others have been on their own with lots of silence. Some of us have been frantically working or cleaning, baking, tidying and being creative; others have simply struggled to get through each day, with even getting up or cooking a meal feeling like a major challenge. Some of us have been well; others have been coping with illness, pain, depression, anxiety and grief. For those of us who have been working, albeit in a different way or in a different place, it is worth recognising that Jesus met Peter where he was – at work. Many of us are tired – physically, emotionally, psychologically, some of us are anxious, some of us feel like we are failing. We are all uncertain. Today, as we wonder 'what now?' the risen Lord Jesus simply says to us: "Friends, come and have breakfast." Talking about what happens next is not the immediate priority; the question for us now is whether we will accept Jesus' invitation to simply come and sit with him, to receive food from the bread of life, to remember that we sit with the One who calmed the storm and who transformed a failure into a miracle. Will you come and simply sit with Him today?

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