

We're nearly at the end of John's gospel and I hope there have been things in there that have challenged, excited and encouraged you. My prayer for these last two weeks is that God will speak to us in this amazing miracle of fish and of reconciliation. Jesus used "fishing" as an example of His KINGDOM Power to **save and provide** from the beginning of His ministry. Do you know what the "Ichthus" is? It is the Greek Word for "fish" but became the "sign of the fish" used by early Christians as a secret Christian identifying symbol and now known also as the "Jesus fish." An acronym of the Greek letters stands for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour".

According to tradition, ancient Christians, during their persecution by the Roman Empire in the first few centuries after Christ, used the fish symbol to mark meeting places and tombs, or to distinguish friends from foes. According to one ancient story, when a Christian met a stranger in the road, the Christian sometimes drew one arc of the simple fish outline in the dirt. If the stranger drew the other arc, both believers knew they were in good faithful company.

I. Jesus' REVEALED

Jesus' appearance is ALWAYS TIMELY, isn't it? (vs. 4) It's always according to His perfect plan, and many times it doesn't fit ours. It may have been that Peter's denial had stayed with him and he thought, "I failed as a disciple. Let me go back to what I know, to what I do best. Let's go fishing." It may just be that human beings need to eat and they were at Galilee, so let's get some food. Maybe there was no money left with Judas gone.

It may be that the disciples were in Galilee because that's where Jesus told them several times He would appear to them.

Jesus also appears at a time of great need. They had fished all night, doing what they were good at, and they caught nothing but at Jesus' command, when they dropped their nets to the opposite side of the boat they caught more fish than they could have imagined. But this event is powerful for yet another reason. You've seen it before. In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus did the very same thing. He showed up, right after they had cleaned their nets in the early morning. So after a long night of labour, when they're ready to sleep until noon, he asks them to put him out into the water because of the crowds. They do, and he teaches for an hour? Or two? All the while, the fishermen sit with in the boat, dead tired. And after all of that, he asks them to cast their nets into the water after they've been cleaned and dried. (Fishermen had to clean their nets each night, so that they wouldn't rot.) They obey, and they pull in a great catch. And start to follow Jesus.

So, Jesus has set this whole thing up yet again. He knows that they feel like failures, and the dream of the Kingdom has died within them. But Jesus takes them back to the beginning, to when they first met him, and starts over. After everything that's happened, the great news is that even if you go back to old ways, Jesus is willing to start things over with you. And he reminds them of their first awe, their first sense of wonder. It was then when they began to follow Jesus.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He taught his disciples in Luke 5:10-11: " [Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled up their boats on shore, left everything and followed him.](#)" This is a reminder for them of their earlier call to follow him. Not by accident, but very timely.

His appearance is COMPASSIONATE. (vs. 5) I don't want you to miss the essence of the story, that Jesus appeared in his resurrected body and showed his divine power, but He also demonstrates his human concern. The term for "Friends" is actually "Children." This form of address in the Greek includes the tone and care of a father. These disciples were the adopted children that God the Father had entrusted to Jesus; they were the future of the Church. They were HIS, bought with the price of His blood. Jesus' question, 'Do you have any fish?' demonstrates the care that God has for us in our temporal everyday needs as well as in our spiritual life; He has promised that his grace will ALWAYS be sufficient to care for us in every way.

Verse 9 says: "[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."](#) Jesus, of course, did not need them to catch fish for Him: He had already provided His own! Jesus doesn't need us to build his kingdom – he could do that perfectly well on his own. However, the Lord graciously encourages our service, not because He needs anything from us, but because He graciously chooses to use us as a means to accomplish His purposes. Meantime there was not one of them who doubted the identity of the risen Lord.

As Jesus blessed the bread and fish, the disciples would no doubt have remembered the feeding of the 5000, and the feeding of the 4000. Peter may have recollected how he once paid the tax man on behalf of both Jesus and himself with a coin found in the mouth of a fish. The blessing may also have reminded them of how Jesus was known the evening after his resurrection by the two on the Emmaus road in the breaking of bread, and of the sacrament instituted on the night when Jesus was betrayed.

You could even take it a spiritual step further: Jesus VERY MUCH cares for his Body, the CHURCH. He wants us to be nourished and healthy, NOT emaciated, hungry, or destitute. He provides the divine example of how we also should care for our own bodies, but especially the household of faith. Jesus already knew they had caught nothing, but yet He asks them because He wants them to recognize their needs and their reliance upon Him for all of their needs to be met. As a matter of fact, HE had bread there and fish cooking BEFORE they made their extraordinary catch. His resurrected presence is assurance of His continued CARE. Trust Jesus to provide!

His appearance is POWERFUL. (vs. 6) Here we have yet another FISH MIRACLE- a supernatural exercise of power through natural means. Jesus directs them specifically with the "where" and the "how". Following Jesus' directions always gets powerful positive results. Do you trust YOUR own instincts and logic, or do you trust God's providence? "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." God's direction is powerful; There are always results when you obey Christ's orders.

Exactly 153 LARGE fish filled the net and the net didn't tear! Not one fish was lost that should have been caught. This was God's way of saying that the gospel will go out into all the world and it would accomplish God's gospel design for men and women everywhere: To draw whomever God has CALLED to the Saving Grace in Jesus, the Saviour, Son of God.

II. The disciples' RESPONSE: The Church's Resolution

We'll take just a few minutes to see the Reception or response of the Disciples who were present, realizing that their response should also be the Church's Resolution; it should be the response of those who are Followers of Christ.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, is quick to recognize Jesus and exclaims profoundly: "It is the LORD." His exclamation, "IT IS THE LORD", again affirms the deity of Jesus Christ, who died, was buried and risen to save those who would follow Him. Those who are closest to Jesus will RECOGNIZE his work first and PROFESS Jesus AS LORD! Their profession accompanies a heartfelt desire to tell others, so OTHERS will RECOGNIZE Jesus as Sovereign LORD and God and serve Him only.

Again we have Peter. He enters the picture with a Big SPLASH! Always full of vim and vigour, jumps off the boat. When he hears the words, "IT IS THE LORD", it's, "Gotta go," Always ready to jump in at a second's notice. I wish I was more of a Peter sometime. Most would take OFF their outer garment to jump in the water, but Peter throws on his covering; - Peter had it off to work but he wanted himself covered in the presence of the Lord. So he wraps his outer garment around him and dives in. He no doubt wants his denial of Jesus to be behind Him; he wants to be reconciled again to His Saviour (which we will see next week).

His zeal shouldn't be disregarded here but rather commended... He had strong affection for our Lord, and so must all who would QUIT the world in order to obey the command of Jesus to FOLLOW HIM. To come to Jesus is to REVERE Jesus as LORD and to OBEY Him as Lord! He jumps into the water and quickly swims to shore, as the other disciples are dragging the fish and boat in and as soon as they get in, Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish which you caught and we'll put some of them on the fire, and who is the first one mentioned? "Peter went up and dragged the net to land." He doesn't say, "I was first in, let those guys do the work." He reveres Jesus in His obedience.

The rest of the disciples aren't mentioned specifically, but one thing is certain, they showed themselves to be devoted followers of Christ. They were not as flamboyant as Peter, not as profound as John, but careful and honest, mindful, faithful workers, not attention seekers, just devout Jesus-followers. Hard workers, standing close by to help drag the fish to shore, taking special attention to the work that had to be done, in the presence of the Risen Saviour. Their example reminds us that we are called to serve Jesus – and that we are all different, with different gifts to bring to the work.

What were we called to be? You probably learned the song when you were in Sunday School: I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN IF YOU FOLLOW ME! That song and this story reminds us of the earlier words of Jesus to "Follow Me, and I will

make you fishers of men." Opportunities are many! Everyone one of you fits the mould of at least one of the disciples. Some are outspoken and brash, some are contemplative, some work away quietly in the background but everyone here has a valuable part in this church body.