

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 29TH-30TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

I'M GOING FISHING (JOHN 21:1-7A)

Peter had promised Jesus that he would follow him until death (Jn. 13:37).

- Not only does Peter abandon Jesus in fear and run away just like the rest of the disciples, he denies he ever knew Jesus three separate times.
- After Peter's betrayal of Jesus, he saw the empty tomb on resurrection Sunday and was there in the room with the other disciples as Jesus appeared to them (Jn. 20:19-22).

Peter knew Jesus was alive (Lk. 24:34, 1 Cor. 15:5) and that Jesus had forgiven him, but at this point, he probably wasn't so sure about Jesus' promise to use him as the "rock" that would be the foundation of the church.

- The disciples were commanded to go to Galilee to meet with Jesus (Mk. 16:7), and at Galilee Peter goes back to what he knew before he met Jesus---he goes fishing (vs. 3) with some of the other disciples on the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee).

Peter's belief at this point was that his past had disqualified him from serving Jesus in ministry as a "fisher of men" (Luke 5:10-11).

- For most of us, there are some things in our past that we deeply regret and feel ashamed of.
- For some of us, we think that those things prevent us from being used by God for anything significant or powerful.
- We settle on just, "fishing for fish".

The disciples fished all night and caught absolutely nothing (vs. 3).

- At daybreak, Jesus stood on the shore and called out to them with a question to which He already knew the answer (vs. 4-5).
- Jesus knows they haven't caught anything--- but He's giving them the chance to admit their inadequacy, failure, and inability.
- He then gives them a very simple command (vs. 6).

At the command of Jesus, the disciples put their nets on the other side of the boat and bring in a haul of fish so large they could barely bring it in.

- The difference wasn't on the right or left side of the boat---- it was between doing work without divine guidance and doing work by divine guidance.
- Something about this scene seemed very familiar to John, who declared to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Jesus first called Peter to be His disciple, it was a miracle just like this He performed (Luke 5:1-11).

- As Peter trembled before Jesus and begged Him to get away from him, Jesus called Peter to come follow Him.
- Jesus promised Peter that if he did, Jesus would make him into a, "fisher of men"----now Jesus replicates the same miracle.

BREAKFAST WITH JESUS (JOHN 21:7B-14)

Peter recognizes that it's Jesus on the shore, puts his shirt back on, and dives into the water to swim to him while the other disciples drag the nets of fish back to the shore (vs. 7b-8).

- There's something about the recklessness and urgency of Peter diving in the sea towards Jesus---Peter has every reason to be sheepish and timid because of his past, but instead he runs towards Jesus instead of away from him.

When the disciples get to the beach, there's Jesus waiting for them, cooking them breakfast over a charcoal fire (vs. 9-10).

- The last time we saw a charcoal fire was at Peter's denial of Jesus (Jn. 18:18), but here we see Jesus as a humble servant building a charcoal fire for a different purpose.
- Jesus is inviting Peter and the other disciples into a place of intimacy, friendship, and fellowship.

The nets are hauled ashore and there were 153 fish (vs. 11), probably meaning that fishermen love to brag about their catch (Jerome said there were 153 types of fish in the Sea of Galilee to represent every tribe, tongue, and nation).

- The resurrected Jesus then invited these men to breakfast---there must have been something remarkable and awesome and yet familiar about the resurrected body of Jesus (vs. 12).

In the 3rd of His post-resurrection appearances, Jesus serves Peter and some of the other disciples a breakfast of fish and bread on the beach of the Sea of Galilee (vs. 13-14).

- The smell of the charcoal burning---a reminder of Peter's greatest failure and regret---became a soothing aroma as Peter sat with Jesus and had breakfast.

Many of us believe that God loves us and has forgiven us, but we have a hard time believing that God has invited us into a place of intimate friendship and fellowship with Himself.

- We think, "God loves me because He has to, but God doesn't like me and He doesn't want me."
- Nothing could be farther from the truth! Jesus has called you His friend (Jn. 15:15) and your proximity to Him is your prerogative (Eph. 2:13).

DO YOU LOVE ME? (JOHN 21:15-19)

"DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE?" (VS. 15)

What did Jesus mean by the word, "these"?

- The boats & nets that represent Peter's old life? The other disciples?
- Has Peter been boastful and claimed he loved Jesus more than the others?
- What about you? What really has your heart?
- What do you truly love? Have you been boastful in thinking you love God more than others do?

Jesus asked Peter if he "agapeo"-ed Him: an all giving, authentic, unselfish, supernatural love.

- Peter responded that he "phileo"-ed Jesus: a friendly kind of brotherly affection.
- Peter was once so sure of his own devotion to Jesus, but now he doesn't trust himself quite as much as he once did.
- Jesus is asking him if he's 100% committed: Peter is answering that he's around 75%.

After Jesus asked and Peter answered, Jesus twice gave Peter an instruction on how he should care for God's people.

- The idea was that Peter could demonstrate his claimed love for Jesus by feeding Jesus' lambs and shepherding Jesus' sheep (vs. 15-16).
- Even though he'd been forgiven, Peter probably thought he'd disqualified himself for this

kind of leadership in the church.

Jesus wants Peter to know that his acceptance was based on Christ's power to make him into what he could never become on his own.

- His past would not disqualify him from the important role Peter would play in God's story in the early church.
- For three denials, Jesus has three questions and three charges for Peter: feed my lambs, shepherd my sheep, and feed my sheep.

The third time Jesus asked Peter, He asked him if he did in fact "phileo" Him--- did Peter really even have a brotherly, friendly devotion to Jesus?

- Peter was grieved by this, and he believed that he did in fact love Jesus, but the best judge of Peter's love for Jesus wasn't Peter---it was Jesus ("Lord, you know everything; you know...", vs. 17).

Peter had been so confident of his love for Jesus that he'd promised to die for Jesus (Jn. 13:37) even though Jesus had said otherwise.

- Now Peter has very little confidence in his devotion to Jesus: he doesn't even trust himself!
- It's when Peter lets go of his own self-assurance and self-confidence and releases himself to Jesus' assessment of him that he hears back something amazing about his future.

When Peter was a young man, he was brash, self-reliant, and independent.

- As Peter matured and grew in the Lord, he would live such a surrendered, sold-out life to Jesus that others would tie him down, carry him away, and stretch out his arms on a cross.
- Not only would he live for Jesus into his old age: Peter would die for Jesus in the same manner as Jesus died (vs. 19).

"FOLLOW ME"

How is Peter going to get there? How will he be transformed from a brash, immature, cocky, self-righteous denier to a humble shepherd, a rock, a saint, and a martyr?

- Through simply following Jesus. Jesus promised Peter that He would make him into a fisher of men: Peter just needed to follow Jesus out of loving obedience.

AS FOR YOU, FOLLOW ME. (JOHN 21:20-25)

Peter has been publicly restored to a position of leadership by Jesus, and Jesus has prophesied that he will live and eventually die for him.

- But Peter is still very much Peter: after hearing how he will someday die, he asks Jesus: "what about John?" (vs. 20-21).
- Jesus responds, "If I want him to remain until I come," "what is that to you? As for you, follow me." (vs. 22).

Apparently, a rumor had circulated in the Christian community that John wouldn't die until the return of Christ, but that's not what Jesus said (vs. 23).

- Jesus was saying that He might have a very different plan in store for John's life, and that was absolutely none of Peter's business.
- This is a stern rebuke for many of us and a very difficult one for some of us to hear: we need to focus on our own spiritual walk first.

We need to be focused on what God would require from our own lives.

- God has called each of us to live for, serve, and glorify Him in different ways.
- God might have an entirely different plan and destiny for the other brother or sister near us.
- Comparison, envy, spiritual superiority, or a desire to be everyone's, "Jesus police" distracts us from obedience to Jesus in our own lives.

The 2nd conclusion of John's gospel, which is very much like the first from John 20:30-31, brings the book to an appropriate close.

- John was an eyewitness of the works that Jesus did, and he wrote them down as a testimony of the reality of what happened (vs. 24).
- But there were many other things that Jesus did---so many, in fact, that there isn't room in the world itself to contain all that He did (vs. 25).

RESTORATION.

- The pathway to your greatest potential in the Kingdom of God is usually straight through your greatest failure, shortcoming, and deepest pain.
- Do you believe God can restore and use you in spite of _____? To begin that process, we must listen to the voice of Jesus and obey.

"CAST THE NET ON THE RIGHT SIDE ..." (VS. 6)

- Sometimes God gets our attention through allowing some level of failure, futility, or dissatisfaction from our own efforts.
- When we admit the futility of doing things our own way, listen to His Word, and do things His way: amazing things can happen in our lives.
- What's God been doing recently in your life to get your attention?

"COME AND HAVE BREAKFAST..." (VS. 12)

- The temptation is to cover, hide, run away from, and mask the broken parts of ourselves and our failures from Jesus.
- The invitation from Jesus is to come with our sin, failure, and brokenness to a table of intimacy, friendship, and fellowship (Rev. 3:20).
- What's your proximity to Jesus right now? If you're far from Him, why is that?

"FEED MY SHEEP..." (VS. 15-17)

- Some of us believe that because of our past sins or current struggles, God can never, or will never, use us for the work of ministry.
- Your ability to be used by God has nothing to do with you: it has everything to do with you surrendering to His transforming love, grace and power at work in your life.
- Do you love Jesus more than "these"?

"FOLLOW ME..." (VS. 19)

- You don't have to worry about the "how", just focus on the "Who"--- Jesus knows every detail of your story and how your life will go.
- You don't need to worry about trying to figure out what that path looks like for those around you.
- Jesus simply says, "As for you, follow me!"
- Are you following Jesus in every area of your life?