



**John 21:1-14**  
**“Breakfast by the Sea”**

**John 21:1** After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself:

**2** Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

**3** Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

**4** But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

**5** Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No."

**6** And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

**7** Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.

**8** But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.

**9** Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.

**10** Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

**11** Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

**12** Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" -- knowing that it was the Lord.

**13** Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

**14** This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

It's funny isn't it how much fish and fishing are part of the Christian faith? For instance how do you know that the person who just cut off is a Christian? They have a fish symbol on the back of their car! That's the same symbol that early Christians used to identify themselves, the ICTHUS, the word literally means FISH. But the letters in ICTHUS had a secret meaning for Christians:

I = (Ἰησοῦς), Greek for "Jesus".

C=(Χριστὸς), Greek for "The anointed".

TH=Theou (Θεοῦ), Greek for "God's"

U=Upsilon (Υἱὸς), Greek for "Son".

S=Sigma (Σωτήρ), Greek for "Savior".

But it was Christ himself who forever fixed the importance of fishing and fishing, it's impossible to read the Gospels and not see the profound influence of fishing in them. Again and again, the whole process of spreading the gospel is equated with fishing. And so the Apostles are fishers of men. And so as the gospel is about to go out into the world, it is entirely appropriate that we end on a fishing story.

There are some who question why John wrote these verse after giving us his summary at the end of chapter 20, some have even thought that this chapter might not have been part of the original. But every early copy of the book of John that has ever been found, always had this chapter. Also we should be very grateful for it, because it clears up for us the great question of how Peter was restored which would otherwise have been sort of mysterious given his betrayal on the night of the crucifixion.

Now as chapter 21 opens the setting has moved from Jerusalem back to Galilee, and the specifically the Sea of Galilee (or the Sea of Tiberias as it was called) where the disciples came from and where most of Christ's ministry had occurred. Now kids the The Sea of Tiberias or Sea of Galilee isn't really a sea, it's a lake 13 miles long, and 8 miles wide. It is fed partly by underground springs but its main source is the Jordan River which flows through it from north to south. Since we are going to be talking about fishing and fish a lot, I'll let you know that there are 35 kinds of fish in the lake but the two most common are sardines (little fish) and Musht fish, which is now more commonly called Tilapia.

And so here Peter and the disciples are back at the Sea of Galilee where their time with Jesus as Apostles had started. You remember that **In Matt. 4:8 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.**

**19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

**20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.**

The disciples had gone back to Galilee because Jesus had specifically commanded them to do so through the women. We read in Mat. 28:10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Several of the disciples are together, interestingly Thomas, who had been so profoundly convinced is mentioned, along with Peter, Peter's two old partners from the fishing business, James and John, Nathaniel and two other disciples whom John doesn't mention by name, but we know that one of them is in fact John.

Peter says "I'm going fishing." And the others decide that's a good idea.

Now we don't know why Peter decided to go back to his old trade that day, the disciples probably needed food and the money that the sale of fish would bring. You remember that Judas had been the treasurer of the disciples, and he was dead. But I tend to see this as something of retreat on Peter's part. Jesus is alive, He has triumphed over death and appeared again to the disciples. But Peter had to still be thinking of that terrible, sinful betrayal of Jesus in the courtyard. He couldn't fight for Jesus, he couldn't stand by Jesus, he couldn't even acknowledge he knew Jesus. But there is one thing he feels He can still do, He Can Fish! **That I was good at. Let's do that.**

So they go out fishing. They go out fishing at night, which was common, because apparently the fish couldn't see the nets they used as well during the night and it allowed them to sell the fish fresh in the market in the morning. But imagine Peter's disappointment when he fails at this as well. They fish all night, and catch NOTHING, **not even a sardine**. Pastor Joel Beeke on one of his trips to Israel spoke to some of the fishermen on the lake, who apparently still fish in much the same way as their ancestors, which is why presumably there are still fish in the lake, and asked do you ever go out and catch nothing? And they said, "sometimes the catch is small, but we always get something!" Well not this night. So imagine how Peter felt when when as they are coming back to shore, in the early morning gloom a figure on the beach hails them: "Children" or perhaps "Lads" would be a better translation, "have you any food" You catch anything? NO. They can't even talk about the one that got away.

Then the figure says try the right side of the boat. Well they'll try anything at this point, and suddenly whereas by their own power they'd gotten nothing, this time they can't even haul in the net they have so many fish!

Immediately John, the man of discernment remembered that time told in Luke 5 when they'd been fishing all night and had caught nothing, and then Jesus had told them to let down the net again, and the net was suddenly miraculously filled to overflowing. And so he says **PETER, IT IS THE LORD!** And Peter, ever the impetuous one, but the one who loved Jesus so very much, Ties his clothing around his body and jumps into the water to swim to shore.

When the disciples get there they find Jesus already has a charcoal fire going, he is cooking a breakfast of fish and bread for them, and he tells them to bring up some more of the fish they caught, so they could cook some of them too. Peter now finally remembers the boats and the net and helps them drag the fish up the beach. And when they count how many there were the number was 153.

**Why did John record the number 153?** Speculations abound. It is said that the ancients felt that there were 153 different kinds of fish, so if we go with the fishers of men analogy it is a sign that they will catch men from all the nations of the world. You can also make an equilateral triangle with 153 dots with 17 dots on each side. Personally, I think it is because fishermen like to record the details of their catch, especially unusually large ones.

Now the net was breaking in Luke 5, but John records that it wasn't breaking here. Why? Well, I'm fairly certain that it wasn't because they'd bought a better net this time. But again all we can do is speculate as to the real reason, some have said that this is a sign that because of the giving of the Spirit the church now has the power to cast wide the net of the gospel and bring in all the elect, losing none

Well let's get to some applications:

1) Most importantly we have an obvious application: As Jesus had said in John 15:5 "without Me you can do nothing."

The disciples found that not even the things that they were good at would be blessed without Christ. This is true of secular vocations –

***"Psalm 127:1 A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.***

***2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep."***

But it is especially true when it comes to the preaching and dissemination of the gospel. It is Jesus who empowers the church, it is Jesus who prepares hearts to receive the gospel, and without his work in calling the elect no saving work is possible.

Matt. 19:26 – “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Just as the disciples had no power to cause the fish to get caught in the net, but when Jesus calls them the net is so full they couldn't draw it in, so too we need to remember that we can't cause sinners to embrace the gospel, but Christ can. This should humble us, and it should cause us to be dependent on the means that He has established for his church and which he has blessed, rather than falling into all sorts of alternative “baiting” methods. “We're just gonna chum the water a little with some free give aways, and a rock concert, and all the other stuff that draws people in. They might not come for the gospel, but they'll come for a chance to win a NEW BASS BOAT. Well yes they will, but you'll find that 9 times out of 10 the fish who come into the net for that kind of thing, swim out just as quickly, they are never really “caught” that is genuinely converted and hauled out of the water and into the church.

*It should also humble us*, plenty of men of great learning, and excessively proud of their gifts, have set themselves to preaching and found that they did nothing. The story is told of one young man, whom everyone was sure would accomplish great things, especially himself... He found out the hard way that you can spend all night fishing in your own power and not catch even what a child with his father might catch in a canoe.

“If you had gone up the way you came down, you might have come down the way you went up.”

2) We should remember John 12:32 "**And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.**" The word there is HELKO to drag, it is the same word that is used for Peter **dragging** the net to shore. Now Jesus does not need us to bring fish to him. When the disciples got there they found he was already cooking fish, but he tells the disciples to bring the fish the caught to Him nonetheless.

In the same way, Jesus could bring men spontaneously to himself, but that is not how he does it, he sends out fishermen, and he fills the nets with his elect people, and they do not break, and they are brought to Christ. That is the great work we are about.

3) Now perhaps you've been fishing and have caught nothing. **Remember this, Peter had to experience the empty net, before the full net.** And it may be the same with you. Are you doing this in your power, without prayer, without a dependence upon the word?

Remember a few days after these events, Peter, would preach one sermon in the Lord's power, and it would result in the salvation of 3000 souls. Do you believe that kind of thing can still happen? It has those are times of revival, and we should pray for them. PRAY the Lord would miraculously fill the net.

And remember everything depends not on the skill of the fisherman or the size of the boat or the materials of the net. It depends entirely on the only One who can call fish to fill the nets. It depends upon Christ.