

Empty Nets to Full Bellies

“Afterward Jesus appeared again to His disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called 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. ⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. ⁶He 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. ⁷Then 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. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.” - John 21:1-14

In this Series, We Have Learned That...

There is a beginning and ending to everything. We need to welcome changes and look for the opportunities they provide.

Some Background

1. This story happens as much as several weeks after John 20.

2. We see again that Jesus had a unique body and was able to manifest (appear/phaneroō) Himself at will.

“Afterward Jesus appeared again to His disciples... ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.” - John 21:1,14

3. For the first time since chapter 7, the story takes place outside of Jerusalem and Judea. Everyone is back home in the Galilee.

“After this, Jesus went around in Galilee...” - John 7:1

The Sea of Tiberias –

“Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias)...” - John 6:1

4. Seven of the disciples are together in the Galilee and have followed the instructions of Jesus. But nothing is happening.

“Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” - Matthew 28:10

5. This location for sharing the bread and fish is important, as is the miracle of the multiplication of fish.

“Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” - Luke 5:5

From Following to Leading

1. Since Jesus isn’t giving directions, Simon Peter declares that he is going fishing. He is not referring to a hobby but a vocation!

- Jesus told them that they would return to their old ways.

“But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home.” - John 16:32

- The disciples get into a specific boat.

“So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.” - John 21:3

- Jesus referred to this vocation as a comparison.

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” - John 21:15

2. Jesus asked them about their lack of success! He calls them “children.” (paidion)

“He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.” - Jn. 21:5

3. Jesus tells them to try fishing on the other side of the boat. This is ridiculous to a fisherman, but it works!

“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.” - John 21:6

4. John recognized Jesus, but Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore to be with his Master.

“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.” - John 21:7

5. Jesus offered the disciples bread and fish and suggested that they eat some of the fish that were just caught.

6. Peter, single-handedly, brings the net full of 153 large fish, but even though the net was full, it did not break!

“Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.” - John 21:11

- The significance of the number, 153.

- The significance of the unbroken net.

The Lessons that We Learn

1. It is important that we get to work for the sake of the kingdom. If we are doing the good thing, we will be directed!

2. When we follow Christ, He is able to direct our moments for His glory and for our good!

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