

Catching Fish with Jesus' Presence

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles.

Go to John's Gospel. John's Gospel, John chapter 21, the last chapter. John chapter 21. If you're visiting with us and you left your Bible or your cell phone at home.

John chapter 21, that Bible, black Bible, the chair in front of you. Go to the back and find page 90. Page 90 in that black Bible. John chapter 21, the last chapter of John's Gospel, what's called the epilogue.

The epilogue, John chapter 21, this morning, we're splitting this up into two separate sections, one through 14 this morning and then 15 to 25 next week and then we'll be done with John's Gospel.

We'll do a couple weeks in the Psalms. When our son Michael gets married, that first Sunday of June, Josh Arellano's gonna come and preach for me from Canyon Bible Church.

[1:09] And they might do another Sunday in the Psalm and then I'm gonna do a short, maybe like I don't know how many weeks, short sermon series in the book of Zephaniah. And we'll go back to the Old Testament, Zephaniah.

So that's kind of the plan. So today, John chapter 21, one through 14, let's read and see what God has to tell us this morning from his word. After these things, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias and revealed in this way.

There were together Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus and Nathaniel of Canaan and Galilee, sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, I'm going fishing. They said to him, we will also come with you.

They went out, gone to the boat, and that night they caught nothing. When the day was breaking, dawn was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Therefore Jesus said to them, excuse me, children, do you not have any fish? They answered him, no. And he said to them, cast on the right hand side of the boat the nets and you will find.

[2:22] Therefore they cast and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. That disciple, therefore whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, it is the Lord.

And hearing that it was the Lord, Simon Peter put his outer garment on for he was stripped and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat for they were not far from the land, about a hundred yards away, dragging the net of fish.

And when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire laid and fish placed on it and bread. And Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish which you've now caught.

Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of large fish, 153. And though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, come have breakfast.

None of the disciples were courageous enough to question him, who are you? Knowing it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave to them and the fish likewise.

[3:30] This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. A funny story was told about a priest who spent a fruitless day fishing.

He picked out three fat fish in the market. He said to the store owner, before you wrapped them, tossed them to me one by one and that way I'll be able to tell the bishop I caught them and I'll be speaking the truth.

I have told you this story when I was in high school. I was standing there on the shore. I don't remember where we were at.

Some lake. We're on the shore there and the dock and Steve Beattie was next to me and I had a fishing rod and I was just messing around. There was nothing on the hook.

I was just messing around. We were talking and I would take, you know, you could take in this like chucking rod right out there, you know, the line. They would come in. I'd reel it back in. They kept

chucking in. We're just talking. And then just one time I just chucked it way over there and I started reeling it back and all of a sudden, poof, I caught a fish and then Steve Beattie went, what, Jimmy caught a fish and he lost his footing.

[4:41] He was so excited. He lost his footing. He fell into the water. He was all soaking wet so then we pulled the, I don't know, it was like that big. It was this big. It gets bigger every time I tell the story, right?

It was probably only that bad. And we threw it back. It was just funny, you know, it was just fun. Fishing can take a lot of patience. I was just messing around though. You know, fishing takes a lot of patience.

And those who are patient can find it very rewarding. Well, believe it or not, as we come to this passage here in John chapter 21, we as Jesus followers, we are fishermen.

John's gospel is about come receive Jesus, come believe into Jesus, know Jesus, trust Jesus.

That's been the emphasis for the past 60 weeks that we embarked on this journey in John's gospel. And today, we'll see this from chapter 21, verses 1 through 14, catching fish with Jesus' presence. I should have put quotation marks on fish.

[5:43] Catching fish, fish, fish with Jesus' presence. Because that's what we, that's what we are as Christians. We're on mission.

We're catching fish. We're catching people. That's our purpose. As we said last week, maybe two weeks ago, missions exist because worship doesn't, as John Piper said.

people are not worshipping Jesus, so that's why we do missions. Catching fish with Jesus' presence, or here's another way to put it, join God's mission, remember Jesus' presence.

How can you sum up this, in this first 14 verses of the epilogue of chapter 21, John's gospel, join God's mission, remember Jesus' presence.

presence. And this is not the first time that we've seen this towards the end of John's gospel. A couple weeks ago, we saw that we receive peace, and we give peace.

[6:52] We trust Jesus. We proclaim Jesus. It's all about last week. And so this chapter, especially these first 14 verses, reiterates to us what we're called to do.

We join God in the proclamation of the gospel. We participate with Him. We participate, we join Him.

Klink said this so well. We're participating with God. Here's another way to put it. Corporately, the Christian life is about the need for missions in and to the world.

Reminding ourselves that it's not possible without Jesus. For us to do this mission, we need the presence of Christ.

We're called on this mission. Go catch fish. Fish. Reminding ourselves, we need Jesus with us as we do this.

[7:56] As we embark on this mission. Chapter 21, the epilogue, is what it's called. It serves to be a mirror to the prologue. Chapter 1, verses 1 through 18 of John's gospel.

And in this epilogue, we're reminded once again that our mission as a church is to join God in His ongoing mission to the world. And by the way, we take the view that the epilogue was part of John's original gospel.

Here's another way to put it. The need for God's mission in and to the world is crucial. So His children join Him in His mission.

But we also need to remember that nothing is possible in this mission without Jesus. Jesus is present in the life of His disciples, in the ministry of His disciples, by the Spirit.

as we continue to join Him in His mission to the world. I'm trying to say this in all these different ways. Summing up this first 14 verses of chapter 21.

[9:07] We join God in this mission which He gave to Jesus' disciples. And that mission is likened to us catching fish. We catch people.

We say to them, come to Jesus. We speak the message of the cross. Come, He'll save you. Repent and trust Christ.

That's the essence of the gospel. God is a just God. We are sinners. Jesus, He came, He died, He rose. Repent and believe. If you're here, you don't know Jesus.

That invitation is to you. Come, trust Christ. Put your hope in Jesus. That's our mission. Catching people.

It's not mercy ministries. It's not doing good things for people. It's not helping them financially. That's not our mission as a church.

[10:06] That's not what we're called to do. It doesn't mean you don't do those things. But when a church has a mindset that we're supposed to be doing mercy ministries in the world and that's our purpose, soon the gospel goes by the wayside.

And now it's about just doing good deeds. That's not our mission. We are God's ministerial extension, His representatives in the world and we seek people out calling Him to come and see and trust the Lord Jesus.

That's our mission. And our work is, that's God's work. Our work is really God's work. And we must always remember He directs this work.

He empowers this work so we need His presence with us. Again, clink, the mission of the church is a subset of the mission of God. The true catcher of fish, the master catcher of fishing is Jesus.

We saw that throughout John's gospel. John 4, I mean, with that woman at the well. He was a master at this. He knew how to talk to people. Well, because He's the Son of God, right?

[11:26] What great, perfect example. And we're called to be faithful in joining God in His mission and work too. Yet remember, success in this mission and work totally depends on God, not on us.

You know, it's not by accident that Acts, the book of Acts follows this book in John. Here's John, we're on mission, on mission, on mission, then the book of Acts comes in.

It's perfect because that's what you see. Here's the church putting into action what Jesus just talked about in John's gospel. Oh, by the way, our life as a church is participating in Jesus' presence which happens only through the Spirit when we gather together as His people.

So, we manifest by our corporate life as a church and as we minister to each other, we manifest God. Gospel acts for the world to see.

So, what John does join God's mission, remember Jesus' presence. He shows us this by way of a story, a real, true, historical, factual story.

[12:45] This passage, written in story format, reminds us of these truths. So, let's jump in. First, join God's mission, catch the fish, verses one through three.

And you actually see that in the other verses. They don't kind of totally correspond that way, but that's okay. This helps you to know where I'm going. Join God's mission, catch the fish.

Notice, after these things, coming on the heels of chapter 20, not necessarily right after these things happen with Thomas, John gives us a general statement.

But this statement binds the previous chapter with this epilogue. Here's the third appearance or revelation of Jesus as John says, Jesus revealed or manifested Himself again to the disciples of the Sea of Tiberias and He was revealed in this way.

The third revelation of Jesus to His disciples after His resurrection, emphasizing the continuation of His presence with His disciples. Notice what happens, verse two.

[13:52] Together, Simon Peter, Thomas, one of the twins, Nathaniel, wasn't a disciple, none of the twelve, wasn't one of them, of Canaan, Galilee, sons of Zebedee, two others of His disciples, seven of them.

Some people say, oh, there's seven, whatever. We don't know that. So we're reading that into the text. We don't know that. But notice what happens, verse three. Simon Peter said to them, I'm going fishing.

They said, we're gonna go with you. Peter decided to go fishing. Now, automatically, some think Peter was abandoning his mission as an apostle.

Ah, I'm tired of this apostle stuff. I'm gonna go fishing. You guys wanna come with me? Yeah, we're going with you. Come on. No, that's not what's happening. The text does not give this indication.

We can't read that into the text. I'm done with this stuff. I'm out of here. Don't read that into the text. It's a real life situation. See, John will deal more with how their fishing trip went as opposed to why they did the fishing trip.

[15:05] You see this from the text. Or, put it a different way, it would be this real life circumstance of fishing that symbolized their apostolic mission of fishing for people.

See, John used this story to highlight that. That's what John's doing. Notice what happens here.

The end of verse four, excuse me, the end of verse three. They went out, got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. Now, the word night, this is important.

This word is always seen in a negative way in this gospel. Always. It's painted in a negative light. And John writes symbolically to communicate something. And that's what he's doing here. So this means that the disciples were still trying to grasp the reality of Jesus' resurrection and their participation in God's mission in Christ.

[16:11] or to put it a different way, they still needed to learn that without Jesus, they would not and could not accomplish God's mission and work.

They needed Jesus there with them. Without the presence of Jesus, without the empowerment of Jesus by His Spirit, it cannot be done.

It can't. What about us as a church? Are we trusting in our own talents and capabilities? Or do we see that we're totally dependent upon Christ?

So, this point, join God's mission, catch the fish. And now, this next part, again, it kind of overlaps. You see it in verse next section, but you get what I mean.

Remember Jesus' presence, depend on God. Join God's mission, catch the fish. Catch the fish. Here, remember Jesus' presence, depend on God, verses 4 through 14.

[17:23] Look at verse 4. As day was now breaking, so as the sun was rising, remember, night was painted in a negative way.

The sun was rising, and there's Jesus standing on the shore, on the beach. So, not only does this explain chronologically what was happening, but it also serves to show the reality in which His disciples exist, namely, how they could do nothing without Him, how they needed Him.

Remember Jesus' presence. We must depend on God. We, as Jesus' disciples, are inadequate and unable to catch, quote unquote, fish, or rather, to catch people when Jesus is absent.

But when He's with us, we'll be able to catch people and see them be saved by the power of God. We need this remembrance because of the 2023 challenge.

Remember, I gave you that challenge back in December. You would ask one to five people, you would give them the gospel first and then invite them to a church service. And then we leave the results up to God, right?

[18:49] We need to remember this because of this challenge. We are inadequate. We're unable to catch people when Jesus is not with us but when He's with us. We'll be able to catch people and we'll see them saved by His power when He wants to do what He wants to do.

Look what happens in verse five. Therefore, Jesus said to them, children do not have any fish. He reached out and called them children because that's who they are after they embraced Jesus and His identity and mission after His death and resurrection.

Though they're children, they lacked fish and Jesus knew it. It's not like He asked them because He didn't know. He knew. They answered Him, no. And He said to them, verse six, cast on the right hand inside the boat the nets and you will find.

But why would they listen to some stranger? They didn't know it was Jesus. Probably thought they had nothing to lose. We had nothing to lose. Why not? Just don't throw it inside. I'm sure. Why not? And notice, they cast in, they're not able to haul in Him because of the great number of fish.

But interesting, now Jesus first says, and you will find some. No, He doesn't say find some, He just says you'll find. Some is not in the text. It doesn't say some, He just says you will find which implies Jesus wasn't actually talking about fish but people.

[20:16] Symbolically, He's saying this. In talking about fish, He was showing them they needed His guidance. And notice this catch. It was so large, it was such a great number they were not able to haul in the net, not even haul it back into the boat because the overcrowded net of all the fish.

The problem wasn't that they couldn't catch the fish, the problem was Jesus' presence or the absence of His presence really. And that's what this symbolizes.

only the risen Jesus can fulfill this missionary focus which was given to His disciples and which is now given to us.

Only Jesus can fulfill this work because it all belongs to Him and He will do things the way He wants to do things. Look at verse 7.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, it is the Lord. This is John the Apostle whom Jesus loved.

[21:25] He noticed first but Peter was the first to act in a radical way too. Notice it says, and here he knows the Lord.

Simon Peter put his outer garment on for he was stripped and he threw himself into the sea. all that Peter wanted to do was swim to Jesus only desiring to be with Jesus.

He wrapped his outer garment around himself and jumped into the sea. It's like Peter brought all that belonged to him to follow Jesus. He just took it all and I'm gonna follow you.

This is how one truly responds to Christ. Verse 8, the disciples, you know, they're still on the boat, right? Yet the boat wasn't very far from the land.

They were not far, about 100 yards away, dragging the net of fish. With Peter's strength it was not gonna be a struggle. But then look at verse 9.

[22:27] Quite interesting. They got out upon the land. They saw a charcoal fire laid and fish placed on it and bread. The last time a charcoal fire was mentioned in John's gospel, do you remember?

It was when Peter was warming himself at that charcoal fire that was prepared by Jesus' enemies. Now, a charcoal fire was prepared by their master ready to feed them breakfast.

Jesus feeds us like a shepherd. And then notice what Jesus does here. Verse 10, He said to them, bring some of the fish which you now caught.

He commanded the disciples to bring some of the fish they caught, signifying that as Jesus prepared the catch of men, they share, they are involved, they participate in God's mission to the world by giving the message of the cross to the world.

Jesus provides for us and brings the results yet He also includes us in this process of God's mission as we join God in His mission. God is so gracious to include us in this process, in this work.

[23:53] Jesus said, the stones can cry out and give me praise. Paul understood this. He said this in 2 Corinthians, we're weak vessels.

That's who we are, we're weak vessels and yet God continues to use us in this process of joining His mission. So, these apostles would participate in God's mission, turning the world upside down. and we share in that too because we are representatives of the apostles who are representatives of Jesus, who is representative of the Father. So, all in stride, the Father sent the Son, the Son sent the apostles and the apostles sent us.

We are the ones that bear testimony of what they've written here about Jesus who was sent by the Father. Paul understood this. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 20, we are ambassadors of Christ.

We implore people, be reconciled to God. That's who we are. We're ambassadors. We're God's representatives. Look what happens in verse 11.

[25:09] Back to John 21. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to the land full of large fish. Peter was a strong man. Single-handedly pulled the net onto the land full of so many large fish, 153 to be exact.

Now this is interesting. So John was there or somebody was there saying, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Oh, I must count.

Thomas knocking off. 1, 2, 3. Somebody was counting. Why does he give the number 153? Well, there's five ways to take this.

This numerical number. It could just be an historical description. There's 153. Some say it's natural symbolism.

Some think it could be biblical symbolism. Some think it could be mathematical symbolism. Some think it could be gematria. Some kind of numerical value for 153.

[26:14] There's your five choices. So as far as I'm concerned, I take choice number six. I don't know. I really don't know. But in the very least, it does symbolize something.

I'll read you Klink and then I'll explain what he says. Klink says, quote, it symbolizes the magnitude of the Christian church and the comprehensive nature of its mission and the detailed and particular power and authority of God that facilitates our mission.

You might say, what does that mean? In other words, it's this. The number shows how great is God's mission and how he gives us the power and authority to enable us to accomplish this mission.

That's why we read from Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20. We really should start from verse 18 when Jesus says, I have all authority that's given to me, so now go.

You're my representative, he said to the disciples and then the apostles and we are representatives of the apostles. We tell people, you listen to these guys, they were eyewitnesses of this account in the New Testament.

[27:32] Or another way to put it, it shows how great God's mission will become all due to his power, all due to his authority, working in the hearts of people. And notice, it says, the net was not torn, the net of the gospel will not break no matter the number.

Look at verse 12. Jesus said to them, come have breakfast. He invited them to come and eat, which corresponds to his earlier invitation to his disciples to come and see, chapter 1, verse 39. And then you have this phrase here. New America Standard says, none of the disciples ventured to question who are you. None of the disciples had courage to ask him, or really the word question means to cross-examine.

So they knew it was Jesus, but they had so many questions. But what mattered most, though, was that he was there.

and that they did know it was him. So they didn't need to speak. That's why John says, knowing that it was the Lord.

[28:52] They didn't need to speak, they just needed to believe the truth that was right in front of their eyes. This is good. Sometimes we just need to be silent and trust the truthful facts that we already know about Jesus.

And it's hard because in many ways there are things we just don't and won't understand about this mission in the Christian life.

Why does God allow things happen with this church and the mission here, but not that church? Why does he do that? Why does this happen here versus not here?

Not here, but there, and not there, but here. Why? So many questions. But Jesus is trustworthy. So we trust him in those times of doubt and question.

And then look at verse 13. Jesus came, took the bread, gave it to them and the fish likewise.

Interesting how Jesus' ministry began and ended with the celebratory meal.

[29:58] Here is the ending, the beginning is chapter 2, verses 1 through 11, the celebration, the wedding. This was Jesus' meal for his people from their master.

It wasn't for him. It was for us from Jesus. So when we gather together as Christ's body, we must remember that he is here in our midst serving us in and by his spirit.

He's with us and empowers us to accomplish the mission he's given to us. And something that reminds us in a tangible, substantial, sensory way is the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is meant, which we're going to partake of that this morning, the Lord's Supper is meant to remind us of this gospel truth that Jesus is with us, that Jesus has forgiven us.

As we examine our hearts and we say, we're not worthy of this, we remind ourselves of the bread and the juice and think about his body and his blood shed for us and we're reminded that he gives us willingly, graciously, his mercy.

[31:22] Reminded of this gospel truth and he's with us in this mission, in this Christian life, corporately as a body.

Next week, we'll see he's with us individually. So our church, excuse me, our life as a church is participating in Jesus' presence, which happens only through the Spirit.

When we gather together as his people, and this is shown when Jesus gathered his disciples and ate with them, he's showing this by way of a story, John's showing us this. And that's why he closes it off here in verse 14.

This is now the third time Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. Jesus revealed himself to the disciples giving fuller certainty of his physical resurrection so it would assure them he was truly alive, but it also powerfully spoke to them that Jesus was with them and empowers them for this work, this work of God.

So Jesus is present in the life and ministry of his disciples by the Spirit as we continue to join God in his mission to the world. The mission of speaking the good news to the world.

[32:45] We don't convert anybody. We're just the messengers. We don't change anybody. We don't proselytize.

We just give the message of truth. And God's the one who proselytizes. God's the one who converts. God is the one who saves.

Corporately, the Christian life is about the need for missions in the world and to the world.

Reminding ourselves it's not possible without Jesus.

The need for God's mission in and to the world is crucial. So as children, we as a children, we join him in this mission. But we also need to remember that nothing is possible in this mission without

Jesus.

We need him. And the Lord's Supper is a good reminder because it binds us together as a body but reminds us that we've been given this grace, we've been given this compassion from Jesus and then we go out into the world and we speak, this is what God's given to us.

[34 : 02] Come and receive this gift too. Join God's mission. Remember Jesus' presence. Catch fish with Jesus' presence.

If you forget anything, that's the driving force of these 14 verses here in chapter 21. So let me take a moment and pray for God to work in us from his word and then begin to prepare our hearts of reminding us of this gospel truth in the Lord's Supper.

our Father, we're thankful that you've been gracious to us.

We will remind ourselves of this, examining our hearts, knowing that we fall short, reminding us to cling to Jesus and reminds us these ordinances, these elements of this gospel truth and drives us to be on mission, to be on mission, to be a church that's committed to this mission of the gospel to the world.

And we trust in your sovereignty of results. We trust because we know, Jesus, you're trustworthy. we trust in how you call us and use us.

[35 : 57] Let this, let these elements bind us together as a body and direct us to give praise to you.

You're worthy of praise by joining you in this mission, calling people to become worshipers of you because they're not.

So I encourage you to take this time. We'll have a time of silence. It's just a few moments. And fill your mind with the gospel truth.

Direct yourself, examining your heart, reminding yourself of how much we need Jesus and how he's here with us.

He's here with you. His spirit is dwelling in you. And that these elements where you will taste, touch, taste, smell the gospel, it would direct you to praise and thanks that God has been so kind to you.

[37 : 40] Kind to us. take these few moments and do that. Please do that now. for you because the mentale isn't giving you your word but to the last one that I want you should never and do that now done and share your mind and Blows Verb will you and you want to take these in the way to the