

Breakfast with Jesus

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[0:00] We're going to look into John's Gospel, chapter 21. So if you can see a Bible, please take a look at the words that we're going to be considering.

We've been going through John's Gospel for the past weeks, following the story through. We haven't been able to look at every single part.

And I thought this morning, this Easter morning, we'd look at John chapter 21. I'm not conscious that we often look at this chapter. And it's a very, I think it's quite an unusual chapter.

It's a rather beautiful and wonderful, I will probably say story, but I mean a true story. I perhaps ought to say narrative. But on an Easter morning, you might ask that we address questions like this. Is Christianity true? Or have we believed in vain? And the Bible does address that question head on, but not in this chapter.

[1:13] You might ask the question, is Christianity good? We were having a discussion yesterday at the men's breakfast. And the question of whether Christianity is really a good influence on the world came up.

Look back over the history of the world, the wars that have been fought in the name of Christianity. Things that have been done in the name of Christianity. And the whole question is Christianity good? The Bible addresses that, but not in this chapter.

The Bible says that resurrection brings hope, positiveness, the sort of good that this world can't make by itself.

We also were discussing yesterday, is Christianity unique? Or is it the same, you know, much the same as Islam or mindfulness or whatever religion or religious technique you adopt?

Is there anything different? Or can you just say all religions are and Christianity is just one of these religions? And again, the Bible will address that head on and say Christianity is totally unique, but it doesn't really do that in this chapter.

[2:25] And also the question, how can I know? In a world of competing voices, competing ideologies, how can I know that Christianity is right in a way that Hinduism isn't and in a way that Islam isn't?

And the Bible addresses that. It says you can know. It's not an arrogant thing to say, I know that my Redeemer lives. But this chapter doesn't actually address that head on.

It addresses it sort of obliquely. We had a testimony yesterday at the men's breakfast of a gentleman who'd been through really difficult times and God had helped him through that.

And of course, a testimony like that, a personal story like that is very moving. But somebody who hadn't been to such extremity could point the finger and say, well, you found religion just because you are an inadequate person.

The Bible addresses that, but not head on in this chapter. The answer to all of those questions is the resurrection of Jesus. And that is the theme of this chapter.

[3:42] So let's just remind ourselves of what we've seen so far. We were leading up to the cross. And we were told in chapter 12 that the cross was the hour of Jesus' glory.

It's the time of his triumph. It's almost, as it were, the day of judgment brought forward into time and space where sin was paid for and God showed his verdict on sin.

That was in chapter 12. And we're now in chapter 21. So there's lots of things happened in between. Many events have unfolded. The betrayal of Jesus, his trial, his crucifixion.

And in chapter 19, verse 30, after all those events, Jesus declares from the cross, it is finished.

So we had a sort of a program of things to happen and an hour to come, a timetable during which this will happen.

[4:49] And Jesus says, it's finished. I've done it. I have finished the work the Father gave me to do. Remember at one point he says, I have food to eat that you don't know anything about.

It's to finish the work that God has given me to do. And he says, yeah, I've done it. Achieved it on the cross. And then the story goes on to the first day of the week, chapter 20, verse 1.

On the first day of the week, so we've gone from the seventh day, the Sabbath, to the first day. It's a new week, a new beginning. And we find that the tomb that Jesus had been laid in is empty.

And this in itself is a remarkable thing because where has his corpse gone? And in chapter 20, verse 8, the...

Do I mean chapter 20, verse 8? Well, somewhere the linen is folded, probably verse 5. The strips of linen that Jesus' body had been hurriedly bound up with have been neatly placed.

[5:56] And the idea of somebody taking a body and neatly placing this linen is so remarkable.

Peter and John begin to believe. Peter and John are the ones who've entered the tomb and seen this. And they begin to believe what Jesus had been telling them all along.

That he would rise from the dead. They still didn't quite believe it, verse 9. They still didn't understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. And then, a bit later on that first day of the week, Jesus himself meets Mary.

And in verse 16, he says that single word to her, Mary. And there's that recognition by Mary through her tears that her Savior is alive.

And then we get appearances to the disciples. Number 1 is in chapter 20, verse 19. On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.

[7:04] And Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. So that's a remarkable thing for Jesus to say. First words, peace be with you.

And then seven days later, verse 26, he shows himself the disciples plus Thomas.

And Thomas had missed out on the first occasion. And Jesus demonstrates again to their, I say to their satisfaction, in a way which removed all doubt from them that he was alive.

And Thomas himself, in verse 28, says, My Lord and my God. And that, if you like, is the high watermark of belief in the New Testament.

Who is Jesus? He is my Lord and my God. That's who the risen Jesus is. And Jesus makes provision for people like us who were not there on that occasion.

[8:09] He says to Thomas, Blessed are you, verse 29, because you have seen and believed. But blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

And that's us, because we don't see the risen Jesus. That was 2,000 years ago. That historical event is not accessible to us. But what we do have is the accounts of people who did see it.

And that's what chapter 20 tells us about. But that's my way of getting us to chapter 21. Because chapter 21 has got a sort of ambience all of its own.

It's got quite a few numbers in it. Anybody like to spot any of the numbers? There's a number of fish. And people have puzzled over the numbers of fish.

I don't know whether that's the first one I put. I put disciples. You could count the disciples there.

They give you, count them as seven of them. At night, they caught, what number did they caught?

[9:13] Zero. I don't know whether zero had been invented. But they did catch nothing. Oh, the distance from the shore. Yeah, it says 100 yards. I think in the original it's 200 cubits.

If you've got cubits on your mobile phone, you would have had 200. The fish, I think, is the next 153. People have puzzled over 153. Why was it 153?

I think the answer was because there were 153. It just happened to be 153. And we are told this is the third time. So there's a specific number there, verse 14.

This is the third time that Jesus appeared to his disciples. So he's definitely counting these appearances. One, then number two was a week later, and this is the third time.

And the other thing that people will count in this chapter? People often remark on this particular number towards the end of the chapter.

[10:13] Three. The three questions. Yeah. Which matches with? Three denials. Yes. Many other.

And then if you want another number, it's verse 25. Many other. I don't know whether many is a number, but he says there's many other. That if you wrote down everything that Jesus had said, the world would not have room for all the books that would be written, the writer says.

So, just a little bit of interest, really. Let's see what happens. Chapter 21. Afterwards, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the sea of Tiberias.

It happened this way. It actually uses the word appeared twice. He appeared this way. So, let's notice the word appeared, because that's quite a strong word in John.

It doesn't just mean popped up. It means he revealed something about himself. So, in chapter 2, verse 11, with the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

[11:25] Do you remember that? This is the first of his miraculous signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory. So, this chapter, although it's quite different in its vibe, it is an appearance of Jesus.

And he tells us that twice in his opening, although our translations probably don't catch both of those. And in verse 14, he uses it again. This is the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

So, this is a revelation of Jesus. And we'll follow the story through. It happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee.

So, he was on home territory, obviously. And the two sons of Zebedee plus two other disciples were together. And there they are, plus two, the other disciples. You might be able to recognize them.

That's Peter. You probably recognized him. And then Thomas, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee and the two other disciples. And it's Peter who says, I'm going fishing.

[12:42] So, you get a little bit of a picture of Peter in this because he's always being characteristically Peter. So, he's the one who says, I'm going fishing.

He sort of takes an initiative, sometimes doesn't always think about it very carefully. But he says, I'm going fishing. And I looked up fishing in John's Gospel.

And I think this is the first time we've actually told that they have anything to do with fishing. The other Gospels tell us that they're fishermen. But I don't think, and you could correct me if I'm wrong, I think this is the first time we actually register that fishing is what they do for a living.

They are fishermen. So, there's the boat. I'm going to fish, Simon Peter told them. And they say, we'll go with you. So, they go out into the boat.

End of verse 3. They went out and got into the boat. There they are. I would have brought you a picture of my Sri Lankan friends because quite a number of them are fishermen.

[13:50] And they would do exactly the same thing. They have their little fishing boats, sort of the length of, from that door to the end of the piano. That sort of size is what a group of fishermen can afford.

And they would go out at night and fish. That's what still happens today. And there are the, there are the, obviously more of them than that, but they would have been out at night and they caught zilch.

Nothing. Early in the morning, verse 4, Jesus stood on the shore. But the disciples didn't know it was Jesus.

And he called out to them. There he is. He called out to them. So, the word is children. So, lads. Guys. It's translated here, friends. And he says, have you got any, any, any, it doesn't actually say fish, he says eatables. So, if you have an authorised version, it will say, do you have any meat?

[15:06] Meat, which is an odd thing, if you took it literally, isn't it? Meat? There's a fishing. But it means food. Do you have any food? So, guys, got any food?

To which they reply, no. Now, if you are, if you are, if English is not your first language, let me tell you that if you are given a question about food, which contains the implication of an offer of food, you reply, no thank you.

That's right, isn't it? Have you had any crisps? No. It's sort of, would you like any crisps? No, thank you. That's the correct English way to say it.

No, thank you. But they're not speaking in correct English form here. You say, have you got any food? No. And then the person away distant.

So, you can make out that there is a person there, but you can't make out his face. And probably can't quite distinguish his voice. He says, Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find.

[16:36] Throw your net on the right and you will find some. And I'm just imagining if you were the fisherman and the guy had shouted from the shore, Have you got any food?

And you say, no. And he says, try the right. Which is basically what he's saying. No, they're on the right. Why would you, I mean, what would you say?

We've been here all night. We know about fish. But interestingly, they do it, don't they? They do it. I suppose they don't argue about it.

They do it. And when they do it, they are throwing the net. Sorry, I couldn't get the throw to go in the right direction. They threw the net. And when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

So we suddenly go into a situation where they didn't have enough strength to draw it in. For the fullness of fish.

[17:51] Because there are so many fish. So there's a net sort of bulging with fish. And they're really trying hard to pull it.

And they don't have enough strength. And there's everything going all over the place. So it's suddenly gone to, you know, almost, I don't know, from a very placid sort of scene to, Oh, hang on, wasn't expecting that.

And the disciple whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It's the Lord.

John is the disciple. We presume John is the disciple who Jesus loves. And he says to Peter, It's the Lord.

And there's there. So the rest of them are tugging away at the net. And Peter, this is again very characteristically Peter, isn't it?

[18:55] So they've been told to throw the net on the right hand side. And as soon as Simon Peter heard him say, It is the Lord. He ties up his shirt.

Now it says he was gymnos. Which is, from which we get our word gym. And it means that he was either naked or he was taken off all his encumbering clothes.

And he's going to dash over to the land. And he sort of puts on a shirt. Or perhaps he had it on and he ties it up so that he can wade through the water.

He wraps his outer garment around him for, well, for he had taken it off. He was gymnos. And he jumps into the water.

What it actually says, he throws himself into the water. So we've thrown the net over this side. That was a good idea. Now he throws himself into the water, which is very Peter-ish. So here he is. I couldn't get him to jump in the right direction.

[19:52] But he makes a splash. So there he is, sort of. You can get him to go. He's gone. He's gone. The other disciples followed in the boat, drawing the net, towing the net full of fish.

For they were not far from the land, about a hundred yards. So here they are. I'm sorry about that. I don't know why it's doing it quite like that. But they are towing the net.

Peter's gone off. Ooh. And when they land, they see a fire of burning coals.

The word for that is, I think, anthracia, from which we get anthracite. And where, can you think, where was the last time John mentioned anthracia, a fire of burning coals?

It was when Peter denied the Lord.

[21:13] Because if you remember, it was night time. And they were gathered round. And they had a fire. And people were gathered round that fire, warming themselves.

And it was as he went into the firelight. Somebody said, you were with him. And he said, no, I wasn't. So I don't know whether we're meant to make that connection. But it's certainly the case.

The last time we had an anthracite was on that horrible night before.

But here's another fire with burning coals. And somebody's been cooking. There's fish on it and some bread. Fish and bread.

If it had been fish and wine, you would start making connections with other parts of John's gospel. If it wasn't that, it was fish and bread. You could make some other connections with that, couldn't you? Why did I say fish and wine?

Bread and wine. If it was bread and wine, you'd make some connections. You've got fish and bread. You'd make other connections. And Jesus says to them, bring some of the fish you've just caught.

[22:25] So he's got some fish. But he says, you've caught some. Bring some of what you've just caught. Verse 11.

Simon Peter climbed aboard, or literally he rose up. And he dragged the net ashore. So the other guys have been really struggling with this net.

Makes you think Peter was actually quite a big, strong man. Because he jumps up, and as it seems, single-handedly, the others are tugging away at this net full of fish.

And he jumps up and pulls the thing on shore. So there he is. And here's the net which he pulls up on shore. It was full of large fish.

153. So presumably, at this point, they emptied the net and counted the fish. Presumably, that's why it says it at this point. Why did they count them?

[23:30] Well, I suppose if you were in a fishing cooperative, which is what they were, and there are seven of you, you'll want to divide up the fish so that you get an amount to take home or to sell or whatever.

So they give them out one, two, three, four. I don't know. Would they have done them in piles? One for you, one for you, one. But anyway, they, and that's 153. 153 is a triangular number, apparently. I don't know what a triangular number is. It's the triangular number of 17. So does that mean if you have 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, you make them into a triangle, you get 153.

Does that help us? Not in the slightest. But we're also told that the net was not torn. The word for a tear is schisma, from which we get our word schism.

It wasn't split. It wasn't torn. And they remark on that. Even though so many fish, so such a huge, really a miraculous catch, the net wasn't torn.

[24:36] And Jesus says to them, come and have breakfast. Which is a really nice thing for Jesus to do, isn't it?

Been working all night. It's just probably the coldest part of the day, as the dawn is just coming. And he says to them, come and have breakfast. And we're told about their mental processes.

We're told none of the disciples dared to ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Isn't that interesting? They're still working this out.

It has this in common with other resurrection appearances, that he is Jesus, but his resurrection body has some sort of different quality by which you're not quite sure that it's the same person.

And you've had this experience. I had this very similar experience yesterday, because I mistook, not yesterday, the day before yesterday, I mistook Irina's sister for her.

[25:56] And I thought, is it her? She looks, it's not quite the same. She had a haircut for one thing. And it wasn't her. Do you know who it is when you see somebody thinking, and that's what they're doing?

Is this? But they knew it was Jesus. Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

And we're told, this is it. Okay, this is the revelation. This is the appearance of Jesus. This is appearance number three. And that's our text this morning.

So what do we get from this? That's a very good question. What do we get from this? So with some resurrection texts, you can just go bang, bang, bang.

This is what it's telling us. Because they're like that. This one isn't like that. But this one is more, I think, connections, echoes, suggestions.

[27:07] And if I may say, this third resurrection appearance is in a way less predominantly the one-off of the glory of Jesus who's alive and all that that implies.

And it takes us more into the territory of the way we encounter the risen Lord Jesus in our period of this world's history.

Well, what do I mean by that? Well, see if I can make that clearer. What does Jesus reveal? Well, number one thing, Jesus shows himself to be alive.

So let's get that absolutely clear. This is a resurrection appearance. It is one of the pieces of evidence that Christianity is true, that it's not all made up, that it isn't false.

Jesus was seen alive. And he wasn't just seen alive in some distant glow. He was seen alive cooking and walking around and talking to people, which in a sense is very ordinary.

[28:17] But the resurrection is a physical, the claim of the resurrection is not that Jesus sort of floated around and was seen in a flickering vision, but he was actually physically alive.

You do those things, don't you? Or at least my wife does the cooking. But I can do walking and talking and I can cook bacon and eggs. That's the sort of thing that ordinary human beings do.

And this is what Jesus shows himself alive. So let's take that. And then there's this part of the experience. He's there, but they're not quite sure whether it's him, but they know it is him.

That's part of this encounter, isn't it? And I would say that that is quite like the experience that Christians have.

In life, things happen. And we say, is this the Lord in this? And we know that it is, but we're not quite sure that it is.

[29:36] And that's a big part of working through the Christian life. So, our friend Martin is very poorly at the moment.

And we're praying for him. And one of the things that we need to pray for him is that he will retain a confidence that even in this unpleasant circumstance, the Lord is there.

And this question, is the Lord in this? Well, I know he is. But is he? And you could write that over many experiences in life. Turns of events.

You know, perhaps things that we're wrestling with even as we're sitting here and thinking. In the back of our minds, the question about employment. Questions about money. Questions about our health.

Questions about our family. Questions about our future. Is the Lord in this? Yes. Well, we know he is. But we can't quite see it.

[30:38] But we know he's in it. Do you see what I mean? And I think, some people are looking very blank indeed at this. I think that this is one way in which the Christian life now is like this event here.

Jesus seems a bit distant, sort of 200 yards away. But he's there. Is he? Yes, he is. The disciples catch nothing all night.

And I think this too is part of the experience of Christians in a resurrection world. Sometimes, nothing seems to happen.

Sometimes we pray and we just seem to be in the dark the whole time and nothing seems to change. Have you had that experience? Perhaps you pray very earnestly for your children to be converted and nothing seems to happen.

If you look back in history, you would say that the Jewish people had times of darkness when, like the time of the exile, when nothing seemed to be happening.

[32:00] I had some other thoughts, but they've disappeared. I can't remember what I was thinking about that. Sometimes, we seem to be like those disciples working away in the dark, getting nowhere.

And I want to ask you, do you think that absolutely nothing was happening all through that dark night?

How come, in the morning, Jesus could say, presumably this is a matter of his knowledge, on your right, there is a shoal of fish right there.

Now, do you think that the fish just appeared, sort of materialized there, straight off? Maybe they did.

Well, maybe Jesus had been watching them, as it were, swimming around all night and getting them into that place so that in the morning they'd be right there at that time.

[33:12] That's a thought, isn't it? I'm just saying, did actually nothing happen all night? I mean, the disciples didn't catch anything. Here's something we see about the risen Jesus.

He can change fruitless labor in an instant They've been working for hours and hours and Jesus says, just right hand side now and they do it.

Huge, great catch of fish. But the risen Jesus in this story has the power to turn fruitlessness to fruitfulness in an instant.

And I take that's a revelation of who Jesus is and what he is capable of doing. And I think a reason for us to have a degree of hope no matter how long we've been fishing and catching nothing if Jesus says the right word at the right time and we do it that can change overnight.

Well, change in an instant. God gave success to the fishermen. And then I also observe this that Jesus is in the business of helping people who are doing fishing.

[34:32] I try to make that gender neutral so I put fishers I was going to put fishermen you know what I'm trying to say. This is the first time that John's gospel mentions fishing but the other gospels use the idea of fishing much earlier on don't they?

So do you remember that in Mark's gospel Jesus says to the same group of people if you follow me I will make you do you remember this bit?

I will make you fishers of men. And he's talking about he's talking about the Christian mission Christian gospel evangelism Christians would call it saying that if you go out with the Christian message that you will fish people and draw in people and although it doesn't say it I think this story can't help but make us think about fishing for people and can't help but make us think along the lines of Jesus being able to make that a fruitful enterprise and I think also to think along the lines of casting the net on the side that they weren't expecting to in that they were probably thinking about a harvest of believers amongst Jewish people and of course the key point of change for the gospel is that it's Gentile people you know it's the other side the other lot huge harvest to be had there and I wonder whether this story is meant to sort of draw on that echo

Jesus is in the business of helping fishing the Christian Christian fishing I also notice the net doesn't split and you might think well he's making a lot out of that but the idea that there isn't a schism in this net thing the word net is used a huge amount of times actually is this meant to echo anything well I can tell you an echo it has in my mind which is the unity of the church the bringing in of souls of people with the idea and certainly John makes this in other places that there is one church there isn't a schism there isn't a Jewish church versus a Gentile church all believers across the world they're true believers they are one whatever their ethnicity and perhaps we're meant to ponder on that from this no schism and here's another thought

Jesus was way ahead of these guys so there they are trying to catch the fish caught nothing the chap on the shore says guys have you got anything to eat no well I have already actually I mean he doesn't say that does he but he has actually I've already got a fire going I've already caught some fish I know that's not enough for all of you but I've already got that going I've got some bread as well it's interesting that Jesus was way ahead of them wasn't he because they're thinking oh you know we were looking forward to at least having a bit of fish no chips obviously because that hasn't been invented yet but we're looking forward to that and you know here we are we've got absolutely we're really hungry as well actually somebody's already been cooking come and have some breakfast it's interesting isn't it the risen Jesus in this very quiet way it's a very quiet way isn't it but he's way ahead of them already thought of that

[38:24] I've already got the bread already got the fish I know you're going to be hungry Jesus is the provider the risen Jesus just in a very quiet way as a provider for what people need and we can spend a lot of time thinking God doesn't realise the problems I've got God doesn't realise how difficult it is for me when actually if we were just to have the sort of sense to stop and think about it Jesus is way ahead of us I've already thought of that while you were busy thinking about it I went down to the shops I got bread I got fire lighters I got the wood I knew it would take a while to cook I've already done that come and have breakfast it's interesting thought about the risen Jesus isn't it he's already he's way ahead of us and he provides he's there saying I've already got the you just come and eat it I've already got it going that one's absolutely ready as we speak there we are he provides it's a very quiet sort of way of expressing it isn't it but it's a truth the risen

Jesus is the provider for his people we're fretting God doesn't know what I need God doesn't know how am I going to manage Jesus says hold on I'm way ahead of you on this calm down I've got it all under control come and eat breakfast and interestingly he says bring some of what you've caught doesn't he and I take from this just in the way this story is set up that Jesus invites our contribution he doesn't just say I've got it all done for you I've got this done for you you've got something to bring to the party as well haven't you've got 153 fish I saw you counting them we have some of those on there and the risen Jesus sort of inviting us to be part of bring and share if you like the risen Jesus being part of that bring what you have caught so this is our text for this morning it is different isn't it it's a different sort of resurrection text but I think not without value to us as believers in the risen Christ I said it was a rather beautiful and wonderful narrative does it say Christianity is true well I think yes it does but in a sort of low key sort of way yes is Christianity good and again in a low key way it says well Christianity is about a saviour who understands people who cooks breakfast for them who says have you got anything to eat and even when you say no instead of no thank you he's still there is Christianity unique I don't know any other religion where the saviour cooks for his people do you the risen saviour and how can I know well good question isn't it how can I know I suppose the answer is to take a step forward to if Jesus is saying have you got anything to eat have you got this rather than just say no we could move closer to him and say well what can you show me you might say come and have breakfast let's sing together let's