

Breakfast with Jesus

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[0 : 00] So please turn to John 21. This morning the plan is to look at the first 14 verses, this evening to look at the verses 15 to 25.

! It would be nice to have a very incisive and helpful introduction. I haven't got one.

All I've got is just to take us straight into the passage and to notice in the first verse that it says Jesus appeared again to his disciples.

And I want to bring out that word appeared. It's quite a special word. It means to reveal oneself. In the older versions it might be translated manifested. To show himself in a way, not just as a sort of fleeting glimpse, but to show who he really is.

[1 : 07] To show what he's really like. And it says this three times in the passage. It says in that very first few words, After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias.

And the NIV says it happened this way. But if you've got another version it might say something like, This is the way he revealed himself.

And in verse 14 at the end of this little section, Again, John tells us what was going on. Jesus was revealing himself. This was now the third time Jesus revealed himself.

To his disciples after he was raised from the dead. We could, another use of that word is in chapter 2 verse 11.

Where, this was the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee. You may remember that Jesus was inviting to a wedding reception. Presumably a wedding as well, a wedding reception.

[2 : 19] And they didn't have any wine, you might remember. Or they ran out and Jesus turned water into wine. And most people didn't notice what was happening. They thought that it was a particularly unusual catering strategy.

You bring out the best wine at the end. Whoa, amazing. But some people saw, when Jesus did that, They saw something different.

They saw his glory. And in Revelation, in John 2, 11, It says, This is the first of his miraculous signs. Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee.

He thus revealed his glory. He revealed his glory. He showed something about who he really was. Not everybody saw it.

But that's what he was doing. He was showing who he really was. And when we come to this, I'll call it a story. It's a true story. But when we come to this story, Right at the end of John's Gospel, Jesus is still revealing himself.

[3 : 28] He's showing something about who he really is, What he's really like. So let's try and follow the story through. It happened this way. This is how he did it.

This is how he revealed himself. This is how he did it. Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, presumably James and John then, and two other disciples were together.

And so, How many of them are there then? One, two, three, four, five, six, no, that can't be right. I think it's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, seven of them.

And Peter says, I'm going out to fish. It seems fairly typical Peter to say, I'm going to do something. He tends to be the first one to say things, not always having thought best about it, but anyway, he says, we're going off to fish.

Jesus has been risen from the dead. He did tell them to go up north. John doesn't tell us about that, but there they are.

[4 : 40] And in a sense, life continues as normal, because you still need to eat, even with the risen Christ, Christ having been risen. So, this is what they do. This is what fishermen do.

So, he says, I'm going to go fishing. And the others say, we'll go with you. So, off they go. And I think it's about the same in Sri Lanka.

It's good fishing if you go overnight. So, they go overnight. I think this is it. So, they're fishing all night. And they've been doing that. And they've caught zilch.

So, let me just get my pen. So, result of the fishing equals zero.

Okay. So, they've been fishing all night and caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know it was Jesus. And this is one of the features of this story.

[5 : 50] There's this question mark that hangs over it. Just, is it, is it him? Is this, is he in on this? Is this who's behind it?

I think, I don't wish to end up repeating myself endlessly. I think it's the same question that we have in our lives. When different things happen, we ask ourselves, is the Lord in this at all?

is this from the hand of the Lord in any sense? Is he around? Is he disappeared? Is he forgotten? Where is the risen Christ in this particular event?

And here, here, they've gone fishing, they've caught nothing, and it's now early morning and Jesus stands on the shore, but the disciples didn't know. They didn't recognize, they had no awareness that Jesus was there.

He knew all about what was happening and he's there and he calls out to them. So, here's the Lord Jesus standing on the seashore.

[7 : 00] They can't see clearly. It's not sort of a face-to-face thing. He's way over in the distance, but it's close enough to call out. And he says to them, Friends, haven't you any fish?

Haven't you anything, haven't you any food? It's more like food. Haven't you got anything? Caught nothing, eh?

And what I really like is the fact that he says friends at the beginning of it. He uses a word which means children. It's what you would use for a younger person in the household.

So I've translated it lads, kids. And I really find it quite something that Jesus shouts out in this way to his disciples.

Oi lads! You got nothing, eh? He, no, I'm going to get ahead of myself unless I'm careful. But that's the way that he addresses them.

[8 : 12] It's, well, what is it? It's very friendly. It, it, it, it, meets them at the sort of level that they're at.

And he, it makes, he makes a, a very, um, it makes a very, very friendly inquiry. He knows they haven't got anything and the, the question is phrased as a negative.

It's saying, you haven't got anything, have you? It's a little bit like what Mary says to Jesus, they have no wine. Uh, you know, in that, in that case, it was a, a statement which acts as a, as a request actually.

But here's Jesus saying, you caught nothing, eh? And they say, no, we haven't. And he says, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you'll find some.

Now this is an interesting comment, isn't it? Uh, Don Carson in his commentary says that if you've ever been fishing, there are actually no shortage of people who will tell you how you could do it better.

[9 : 22] And he says, if you don't believe me, try going fishing with my children. So, but, so this person from the shore says, that way, try over on the right.

And they don't seem to contest it. They, they have a go. They chuck the net over on the right hand side. And when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. They were unable to draw, they were unable to draw the net in because of the large number of fish. So, something remarkable happens. I don't know whether the same sort of thing would have happened every now and again that you'd try and try and try and then you'd suddenly hit the sort of sweet spot as it were and, and, and, and suddenly get a, a net full.

I would have thought that would be a, pretty unusual. I think what we have here is a miracle. It doesn't say that it's a miracle and, question of how you define miracle.

Is it a miracle of knowing where to put the net or is it a miracle of provision that God sort of suddenly puts the, the fish there at the right time? But, in a quiet sort of way, oh, you know, this is pretty remarkable.

[10 : 44] And, they can't haul the net in because of the large number of fish. And, so we have Jesus on the shore and then we have a number of reactions.

So the disciple whom Jesus loved, we, we presume is John the gospel writer. He seems to twig. He seems to get the idea of this.

And he says, it's the Lord. there's so many factors in this that combine and it's enough for me to, to draw, to, to realise what's going on.

The Lord's behind this. It's the Lord. It's the Lord. So, one of them has the insight to realise who it is. Simon Peter jumps into action yet again, pausing only to wrap his outer garment round him. I don't know, usually when you jump into water you take clothes off rather than putting them on.

[12:01] But, maybe he's thinking about what he'll look like when he lands on the seashore. But, anyway, he's, and he jumps into the water. What it actually says is he throws himself into the water.

They threw down the net and now he throws himself. He throws himself into the water. So, there's the scene. Some of the disciples struggling with this large catch of fish, trying to draw it in.

John realising it's the Lord. And Peter, he's already off. He's in the water up to his neck probably.

And, in verse 8, the other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from the shore, about a hundred yards.

So, let's give us that picture. So, there's the stranger on the shore, there's Peter, already jumped in, and there's the rest of the fishermen working really hard to pull this net in.

Verse 9. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals with some fish on it, and some bread.

[13:35] I haven't drawn the bread. And, Jesus says to them, bring some of the fish you've just caught. So, Simon Peter goes back onto the boat, he climbs aboard, and drags the net ashore.

Now, I'm not quite sure how this works, whether it means he jumps into the boat so he can get a hold of it, and then jumps out so that he can drag it ashore, but he certainly goes up into the boat, and he draws or drags the net.

So, we have a charcoal fire, it does particularly say it's a charcoal fire, using the word from which we get anthracite. I can't remember what it is, but I remember thinking that's the word that looks like anthracite.

it's a charcoal fire, and we're told that it was full of large fish, but the net was not torn.

So, if I fill this in, splits in the net, how many? None. Fish, how many? 153. People have tried to find a significance in the number 153 for the last 2,000 years, and I can't find any convincing significance.

[14:54] It's a triangular number, if that's of any interest to you, but I'm not even quite sure how triangular numbers work. Anyway, 153, so presumably they just sat down and counted them.

Presumably that's what fishermen did with fish. and Jesus says to them, come and have breakfast. He doesn't use three words, and have breakfast.

He just uses one word which is translated come and have breakfast. It's a word which you could translate dine, but because it's early in the morning, the particular sort of dining is breakfast, and the breakfast is there.

Come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared to ask him, who are you? Interesting that in the other gospels, sometimes people don't dare to do things.

They don't dare to ask him. They didn't understand, but they didn't dare to ask him. And here again, they don't dare. Moses didn't dare get too close to the burning bush, you remember.

[16:09] There's other examples of people not daring to do things. And here they don't dare to ask. They don't dare to ask, who are you?

They knew it was the Lord. So in this funny position of knowing it's the Lord, but being scared to ask for confirmation. And it says, Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. I've got something to say about the bread and the fish in a moment, but I'm interested in this being the third time.

there's some threes in this chapter. I presume there's a significance to three being very definite.

Two or three witnesses establishes something, and this is the third time Jesus has appeared to his disciples.

Not quite the same as the previous two that John has recorded. He talked about Jesus appearing near the empty tomb and coming and standing in the upper room.

[17:27] Those things Jesus sort of said new stuff and made important points that he wanted them to understand, but this third time seems a lot more nebulous, a lot more mysterious.

But John wants it included. This is the third of these occasions and you need to put them all together. Well, that's the passage, and I simply want to make some observations about it. And I don't think it's possible to draw a dogmatic propositional teaching from this. I don't think that's what it's intended to do. But I think what it does do, if you have the ears to hear it, it sets up lots of echoes. And as you listen to it, you think, oh, that's a little bit like something else, or that reminds me of something else.

And I know not all the Bible, the right way to handle it is to say what it reminds you of, you say what it actually says. But I think in this case, I think it's allowable for us to say, well, this reminds me of something, and that's the way I'd like to take it.

[18 : 42] So here are my observations. questions. The first one is to say what I already said, that Jesus, the risen, unknown Lord, calls out to his disciples, kids, lads.

And I add to that that he doesn't tell them off for getting down to ordinary life. That's what they're doing. They're just living their ordinary lives. They're fishermen.

fishermen. Jesus meets them as they're fishing. I sort of wonder if they had been administrators, that Jesus would have met them over coffee at tea break time.

Or if they had been teachers, that Jesus would have been there in the staff room or somewhere in the school hall. Or if they'd been housewives, that Jesus would have met them down by the open market.

Or as they were queuing up in Sainsbury's or something like that. This idea, I think this is the idea that the risen Jesus meets his people when they are going around their ordinary lives.

[19 : 49] They don't always realise it, but he is there. And they perhaps have this question, is it the Lord? Is he in on this? But yes, in a quiet way, we know the Lord is there.

Here he is on the seashore, calling out, Oi, lads, not doing very well at the moment, are you? And I offer that as an observation that perhaps we could take into our own lives that whatever we're doing tomorrow, that Jesus is not far away and he knows how we're getting on.

He knows whether we're doing very successfully, which we might do, and he knows if we're finding it hard and he knows if we've been finding it quite difficult. And he calls out in this very Jesus-like way.

He's not ticking them off. He's saying, I'm over here, I know exactly how you're getting on, do you need any help?

Something like that. Second observation is about fishing. This does happen to be fishing, and it is a fishing miracle.

[21 : 09] It is to do with fish. Do you have any fish? They had a large number of fish. They counted the fish. It's to do with fish. It's also to do with drawing.

They were unable to draw in the net, and then they draw in the net, and Peter draws in the net. This large number of fish. And I'm taking some echoes off that.

The first echo that comes to my mind is that right at the beginning, Jesus said to his disciples, you're fishermen, I'm going to make you fishers of men.

Now, he doesn't say that in John, so I think we're not entitled to say John is very deliberately picking up on this, but I think it's an echo worth thinking of. Here we are in the resurrection time of Jesus.

How does Jesus meet people? What is he about? What's life going to be like? In one way, it's ordinary life. But there's another important thing for the church to understand, that she is going to be in the business of fishing from now on.

[22 : 17] As Jesus said to Peter on another occasion, I'm going to make you a fisher of men. you're going to be fishing for people.

And you're going to be drawing them in. And that word drawing is used, is used by John, and every other place that he uses it, it's to do with drawing in people.

So, for example, in chapter 6, verse 44, Jesus talks about the importance of the work of God, and he says, chapter 6, verse 44, he says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

There's an impossibility about harvest. We're talking about people coming to the Lord unless God himself draws them. It's a very big net.

It's very difficult to pull in. Human beings can't do it. The Father himself draws this net in and draws people in. We're dependent on the input of God, on the work of God.

[23 : 32] We can't do this on our own. You know, we'll spend all night fishing and catch nothing unless the Father draws in this net. And the word is also used in 1232, John 12:32, where Jesus speaks about his cross, and he says, about the cross, I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all men, or all, to myself.

He says, when I'm lifted up from the earth, lifting up from the earth, is his way of saying this particular method of death, not stoning or starvation, but being put, stuck on a piece of wood, nailed to it, and stuck up in mid-air, if that's what happens to me, if I'm lifted up, there is a drawing power from the cross.

The crucified Saviour, Jesus put to death on the cross for the sins of many. Jesus says, look at that, explain that, communicate that, give people a sense of what happened there.

and there is a powerful drawing, that draws in this net, draws in the net, not just from the people who were there at the time, not just from one or two nationalities, but I will draw all sorts of people, all over the world, there's this drawing power, when the net goes over the side you weren't expecting, and you can, there will be a drawing in by the power of God and by the demonstration of the cross.

And I don't think we can get away from the fact that this story is of a miracle harvest. It's a miracle harvest, isn't it? And perhaps that's an echo we can let echo around in our minds.

[25 : 33] What business are we in as a church? Well, one thing, we're in the business of fishing. Christianity is not just a religion to comfort people where they are, but it's a religion of reaching out to people who don't know that they have anything to benefit from in being a Christian, and showing to them the cross of Jesus Christ, that he died on the cross for the sins of men and women, and to draw people in by the power of God.

God, and there's a miracle harvest. Can't be done without a miracle. So I just think we're allowed to set that up as an echo as we think of ourselves here in this city, which statistically is, was it number one or number two for non-belief?

Didn't used to be that way. So I was talking to Peter Crowhurst from the North Lane Community Association, and he's doing a guided walk, preparing to do a guided walk around the North Lane, and there were loads and loads of little churches there.

He was telling me about it, we were chatting about it, but not the case now. It needs a miracle, and this story talks about a miracle, a drawing in miracle.

fire. Let's continue as we make another observation here about this fire. Jesus preparing breakfast on a fire of burning coals.

[27 : 15] It's a friendly fire. Here's a question. The word for a charcoal fire is used in one other place in John's Gospel.

Anybody like to suggest when we last had a charcoal fire mentioned? Peter. Yeah, it's in chapter 18, it's in verses 18 and 25, where there was another charcoal fire, and Peter was warming himself by it, and somebody came up to him, not a very frightening person, but somebody came up to him and said, are you a disciple?

Do you remember that? That was a charcoal fire. And Peter said, no, no, no, no, nothing to do with him, be far too embarrassing to be associated with Jesus.

No, we'll put that on the back burner, if you want to use another fire-related metaphor. The fire that Jesus had kindled was a friendly fire, fire.

But not all fires are friendly. And there's a little echo there, it's rather an unpleasant echo, isn't it? But it's an echo of realism, and it says, in this world, if you're going to be a disciple, you've got to work out which are the friendly fires and which aren't.

[28 : 36] You can go and warm yourself in such and such a place and feel very comfortable and benefited, and then all of a sudden you realise that you've got yourself in a position where you're denying the Lord Jesus.

Do you see that point? We can get ourselves in a position of comfort around a, as it were, a charcoal fire, and it suddenly comes, are you a Christian then?

And we suddenly find ourselves backing off and saying, oh no, no. Would you agree with those, what's the word for them, fundamentalists?

Would you agree with those fundamentalists? Jesus died for our sins, well that sort of stuff? No, I don't do that. All of a sudden, you see, and there's a little echo here.

It's going to be dealt with a little bit later on as Jesus actually talks directly to Peter, but I point out that here is a friendly fire, but not all fires are friendly.

[29 : 40] A little warning there, and a bit of a challenge actually. A bit of a challenge if we think we can live the Christian life with a foot in both camps.

If we think we can live the Christian life, so when we come to church, we're all wonderful and we enjoy singing and all lovely to see you and everything, and then when we're not in church, when we're not with Christian people, we are indistinguishable from the other group of people in our attitudes, in our things that we think of funny in the language that we use, and we try to have a foot in both camps.

Can't do that. You either warm yourself at one fire or the other, but not at both. And another couple of observations.

This time it is to do with the words. Jesus says in verse 12, come and dine. That's what he says to his disciples in verse 12, come and dine.

Now right at the beginning of the gospel, so I'm going to fill, no, this is come and dine is what he says here. At the beginning of the gospel, I don't know whether you remember it, there's a little phrase that goes come and something.

[31 : 06] It might do, that wasn't the thing I was thinking. I was thinking 139. Doesn't mean that that's wrong, because it might be right, but it just wasn't the one I was thinking.

Chapter 1 verse 39. Come and see. Come and see. And I'm just noting the progress or the development here.

The beginning says come and see. Come and see. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. The beginning is come and see. Come and find out. Come and dip your toes in the water. No commitment.

Just see. See what you think about Jesus. Come and hear what he has to say. do a bit of research. A little bit like boyfriend and girlfriend.

[32 : 10] They're just going out. No commitment. Just finding out a little bit about what each other likes and whether they get on. And they might find they don't. How about that?

Beginning come and see. Maybe you have been in that situation. Maybe you are in that situation. What Jesus is saying come and see. Go on.

no harm. I'm not asking for a commitment at this stage. Just asking for information. John's gospel begins that way.

In its early chapters it says to the reader come and see. Come and see what you think. Read a bit more. What sort of person is Jesus? Do you think he's an ordinary person?

Do you think this is all made up? Do you think this is the sort of person that you could easily write off and get on and try and find some other meaning in life?

[33 : 03] Or do you find that as you come and see that there is something transcendent about Jesus? There is something that you can't just say well this Jesus oh he's just a politician.

I know about politicians. Or this Jesus is just a bit of a fanatic. I've got enough fanatics on the internet to satisfy me. I don't need any more.

I think you'll find that if you come and see that Jesus will not fit any of those categories. And if you're honest you begin to find there is somebody here who you can't put into a category so much as you end up worshipping.

Come and see. That's where it begins. Come and see. And maybe that's where you're at or maybe that's where your friends are at. Come and see. That's a good place to be.

At the end of the gospel he's not saying come and see. He's saying come and eat. come and eat with me. Verse 12 come and have breakfast.

[34 : 04] Come and dine. I think that's what he says. He says come and see to the person who's dipping their toes in the water. But when you've taken the plunge he says come and dine.

Come and dine. Like in the Lord's Supper like in the book of Revelation I'm standing at the door knocking.

If anybody opens the door I'll come in and dine with him. We'll sit at table together. I know many of us here are committed Christians.

I think that's the word that Jesus is saying to us. Let's continue to eat together. Let's not be strangers. I have food to offer you.

I have sustenance for you. I have stuff for you to eat. And let's come and spend time with me.

[35 : 02] Dine with me. Another place he says abide in me and I in you. And I think it's the same sort of idea. Let's have that communion. Let's have that closeness together.

Let's let it be said that you're a follower of mine and you're not following too far behind. Another observation. Again this is to do with words.

Notice the verse 13. Jesus came, took the bread, gave it to them and he did the same with the fish. Jesus took the bread, gave it to them and did the same with the fish. Now there's a place in John's gospel where very very similar wording is used.

I'll show you in a minute. Anybody like to guess where it says in John's gospel something about bread, fish, taking, giving and doing the same?

[36 : 05] Yeah, feeding, I think it's the 5,000 in John but yes it is. It's this miraculous feeding. John 6, 11. Just see whether I can convince you of this.

John 6, verse 11. This is the feeding of the 5,000. I'll quote you the verse. John 6, 11. Jesus then took the loaves, loaves and bread I believe is the same word, gave thanks, distributed it, distributed it to those who were seated as much as they wanted.

He did the same with the fish. Very similar isn't it? He took bread, gave, did the same with the fish. Almost in exactly the same order. I find that a fascinating comparison. That we have the mighty Lord who in the feeding of the 5,000 demonstrates his divinity, his enormous impressive power to take a small number of loaves and fish and feed 5,000 people.

absolutely staggering and amazing and the people who saw it, when it began to dawn on them, they thought this is absolutely revolutionary and here we have the same power at work for just seven of them, wasn't it?

[37 : 40] Seven of his mates. Jesus says, guys, you're hungry, you've been working hard, you haven't caught anything, I've actually made breakfast for you and here I am giving you bread and fish with the same hands from the same Lord who can feed 5,000, the same Lord who can make the dead rise with the word, the same Lord who one day will judge the living and the dead and this same Lord says, here you are, I've got something for you guys, I've got something for you today now that you need in your life and here it is.

The same divine Lord who fed the 5,000 gives provision to me. I find that a very helpful thought. Here we are, we're probably not fishermen, we might be, I don't know, they say Catherine will be in the doctor's surgery and some of you will be in Sainsbury's and some of you will be at school and some of you will be in the office and some of you will be studying or wherever it is, wherever we are. This thought that just looking round the corner is Jesus who says I have the same powerful touch that I had all those years ago, I'm able to supply you.

And whatever it is that you are fearful of, whatever it is you are lacking, wherever it is you feel I'm a bit stuck on this, I don't know how I'm going to manage with this, the Lord says I see you, I can see that, if you'd like to come, come and dine with me, let me prepare it for you.

So I offer that as an observation, and I finally remind us that through this whole story, there has been this question about his identity and his presence.

[39 : 55] Throughout this, they've said, is it the Lord? None of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord.

But they still seem to be in this sort of slight question mark, this slight, I don't know what the word is, they're not, yeah, there's a question buzzing around in their mind.

I think we can live with questions, we don't have to have everything answered, and sometimes faith means that we press on, even though there's little voices saying, you're quite sure about this, and we say, well, I'm sure enough to go forward anyway.

And here they are, is it the Lord? we were all night and we never caught a thing, is the Lord there? Somebody advised us to throw the net on the other side and we did, was that the Lord?

We caught this huge catch, it was amazing, that must have been the Lord. And then we had such problems drawing that in, was that the Lord? and then we had this offer of food, it was only a little, is that the same Lord that fed five thousand?

[41 : 24] And then as it were they look him in the eye and it is the Lord. They still didn't dare ask him, interesting isn't it? And that's where we'll finish our meditation on this passage this morning.

Thank you.