

John 21:1-14

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[0 : 00] The book of John, chapter 21, verses 1 through 14. Please stand for the reading of God's word. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

Simon Peter, Thomas, called the twin, Nathaniel of Cana and Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, I am going fishing. They said to him, We will go with you. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, Children, do you have any fish? They answered him, No. He said to them, Cast a net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.

So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, It is the Lord.

[1 : 04] When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped from work and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came into the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, about a hundred yards off.

Then they got out on land. When they got on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fire laid out on it and bread.

Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish that you have just caught. So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them.

And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you?

They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[2 : 06] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning and a special welcome to those of you who are new to the neighborhood.

We're so glad that many of you are even finding your way here in person, and it's a joy to meet some of you Sunday by Sunday. And for those of you who are still with us on Zoom, we praise God for you and ask that you'll be encouraged as we gather here together.

Last week, Pastor Nee preached on the purpose statement of John's gospel, which could be summarized that you would believe of chapter 20, verses 30 and 31.

And in one sense, it feels as though his book is complete. It's odd that it goes on beyond those verses.

It moves beyond belief, which is interesting given that his reason for writing has been accomplished.

[3 : 23] So for you and me this morning, the questions that we bring to the text are simply, what is going on?

Why the epilogue? Why the stuff in chapter 21? I guess I would say that there's something about our life experiences that teach us that at times it's not simply, what do you believe?

But the question of the hour is, do you believe that which you say you believe? Do you believe what you believe you believe?

The relationship between believing and truly knowing? I was thinking about the strength of science and the need for experimentation.

It's one thing to have a hypothesis proven once and to believe that you have come on to something.

[4 : 43] It's quite another when that hypothesis is proven on multiple occasions through independent resources one of another because then you move from a belief to a believing what you believe.

You move from facts to knowledge. You, in a sense, understand that repetition is the proving ground of assurance.

That initial understanding receives irrefutable confirmation when it happens again. Facts get verification and therefore land in our life as truths.

Convictions need confirmations. Belief must become knowledge. Believing and knowing. Believing and knowing. I love the literary artistry of chapter 21, the verses that were read. I hope you have your eyes on them again, particularly verses 1 and 14.

[5 : 56] The writer is trying to ensure us so that we won't miss the point. There's something of repetition going on here with resurrection belief.

It says in verse 1 that he manifested himself or revealed himself to him again. Again. And he did it in this way.

Or verse 14. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. Our story for the day is landing between the literary artistry of repetition, of resurrection.

It's almost like this story for me is the middle child. We had five. The middle child is the one that always needs to cry out for attention.

I mean, initially. The look at me. This is the look at me resurrection text. I know you were wowed by the Mary Magdalene thing. And I know that when the disciples were fearful that night and you appeared to them, it was one thing.

[7 : 13] And that the next Lord's Day when Thomas was without faith and you appeared to them again, that was another thing. But it is the third time when you move from the fearful community to the lacking of faith community to the fact that we are his followers community and he manifests himself again.

These resurrection occurrences move from the despair of the eleven to the disbelief of Thomas to those who are simply stated here as the disciples.

Do you see that's what's going on? This text is meant to move the church from believing to knowing.

And you see that not only on the bookends, but you see it even in the story, don't you? We're going to uncover it a little more, but in verse 4, they did not know that Jesus was in their presence, but by the end, they wouldn't ask him anything because they had now come to know that this is Jesus. Well, what's the manner in which that took place? And why is that something that Christ Church Chicago needs today? The country may be on the verge of what people speak of as a constitutional crisis or a nation on the brink or a people divided, but the church also speaks of a crisis of confession, of a people yet in division, of a people who believe but need the testing ground to ensure that they believe what they believe they believe.

[9 : 00] This is the manner. It happened at a time when the life of the church had followers who were tired, frustrated, aimless, and on a long night of futility.

That's when their belief turned to believing what they believe. Take a look at the opening, verse 2, Thomas, called Simon, Peter, and Thomas, called the twin Nathaniel of Cana, the sons of Zebedee, and two others.

Seven. Seven of the eleven now. Simon says, I'm going fishing. We'll go with you. They went out. They got into the boat. But that night, they caught nothing.

Their belief was solidified at a time in the life of the church where they were under great sense of frustration.

this sense of all toil, no return.

[10 : 21] Am I preaching to anybody here yet? Of all effort, but yet nothing earned.

have you arrived into my sermon yet? Of relentless digging, but couldn't stave off real disappointment.

of your big time labor over long seasons, yet still experientially coming to nothing.

Let me get it as clean as I can. The repetition of the resurrection, which put them on their feet again, came at a time when aspirations were yet unfilled.

Can you imagine it all night? The throwing out of the net, the weights sinking, the pulling on cords to gather, and nothing.

[11 : 36] The net again upon the bareness of your chest, the throwing of the net, the sinking, the nothing.

The nothing. All night, nothing. This is an existential crisis of belief.

This is at an hour of futility. And I feel that the church in general and Christ Church Chicago as a family stands right now between the dot that ends verse 3 and the opening phrase that begins verse 4.

They went out, they got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing, full stop, period. COVID-19 may have done it to you.

It certainly unwound the world. The political climate may have contributed to you. The issue of multi-ethnic racial unity and aspiration within the life of a congregation might compel it upon you.

[13 : 07] The desire for appointed leadership that will just spur us into a new day and the disappointments that are with you.

the temptation in that very moment is to jump ship to call it a day to quit to hang up your nets to find another lake.

But as we sang today, you make all things new in places we don't choose. It's at that kind of time that the early church went from an initial belief to irrefutable knowledge.

Look at that. It moves then from futility to what you can only describe as fullness. Verse 4, and don't you even love the literary conventions of night and daybreak?

Just as the day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, Children, do you have any fish? They answered him, No.

[14 : 30] He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. So they cast it. What a story.

I love the way truths can emerge from narrative. just two observations here. Notice, they didn't know that Jesus was actually with them, albeit at a distance of 100 yards away, and under the breaking of light where they probably couldn't even make out his face from what we read later is of some 100 yards off.

They didn't know. they believed, John 20, 30, and 31, but they didn't know that this was Jesus.

They didn't know that he was with them already. And then secondly, I love this line, so they cast it.

I mean, imagine what you would feel like after being in the boat, eight, nine hours, whatever it was, I don't know. Some unknown voice rolls over the waters, probably didn't need to speak very loudly if you've ever been upon a lake.

[15 : 55] You could travel 100 yards in the quiet of the morning simply by saying, have you caught any fish yet? No. cast it on the other side.

So they cast it. What did they do? The early church, in a moment of futility, kept doing what they do. They just kept doing it. Fisherman fish. They threw their net out again. And futility gave way to fullness.

Belief began to move toward knowledge. Look at 6b through eight. And now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish.

The disciples whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, it's the Lord. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment for his strip for work and threw himself into the sea.

[17 : 00] And the other disciples came in the boat dragging the net full of fish for they were not far from land but about a hundred yards off. Just so many wonderful things there meant to make you smile.

He gets dressed in order to jump into the water. A couple of things that are here on this fullness, two observations that I would think the writer wants you to see.

One is the quantity of fish, the quantity of fullness that replaced their futility. I mean, that's the way he put it. They couldn't haul it in, verse 6, because of the quantity of fish.

Later, verse 11, they're actually going to tell you that by the time they got it in, yes, it was 153 of them. They counted them. Futility went to fullness and the fullness was unforgettable down to the very number.

they never forgot it. In other words, they knew what they knew they knew. Christ Church Chicago, do you know what you know?

[18 : 11] Do you believe, or do you believe what you say you believe, or do you believe what you believe you believe? When futility moves to fullness, when the quantity of the catch was beyond the wildness of their imagination, it was an unforgettable recognition that God in Christ had done something for them.

Peter launches in. Let me put you to the other observation, not only the quantity of fish, which I think speaks to our future as a church, in what God is going to accomplish, but it's the quality of the response is also elevated.

Did you notice this little phrase about Peter? I almost missed it when I first read it. John says it's the Lord when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, therefore he jumped in.

there's a quality of belief that is shifted in John from sight to sound, when he heard, not when he saw.

Early in John's gospel he's played on this idea of knowing 87 times in the gospel, no more than 25 occurrences in the other three gospels independently of one another.

[19 : 48] 87 times John is moving you from this idea of believing and knowing so that John the Baptist says he was in our midst and I did not know him. Twice he says that until the spirit says to me upon the one whom you see the spirit descending.

The blind man in chapter 9 says I do not know where he is. And then later they will say we do not know where he is from.

And then Jesus will say I who am speaking to you am he. There's this movement from I do not know to now I see. And Peter here elevates the quality of response.

When he heard, he knew. I think this is very informative for you as you're thinking about a season of futility.

Trust the word of Christ. Trust the word. It can be followed regardless of that which you see. That which you hear from the Bible is more accurate, faithful, and trustworthy than all that your circumstances show you by sight.

[21 : 09] futility, fullness, an unforgettable fullness that actually is capped off by renewed fellowship and being fed.

Look at verse 9. When they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire in place with fish laid out on it and bread. And Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish that you have caught.

And then in verse 12, Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. And now none of them dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord.

And Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and so with the fish. fish. Their futility was replaced with his fellowship.

That's what many of us need. This charcoal fire already in place and it's as though he had already been fishing, didn't even need their fish.

[22 : 30] But he had fish, but notice he also said, well, why don't you bring some of the stuff you caught? I mean, Jesus is so amazing in his fellowship. He actually has everything prepared for them, but he's also willing to say, well, let's share in your take too.

Bring what you got to my table. And there's this full fellowship. I don't actually think fellowship is the end of the purpose here, and I think it's because of what we're going to talk about next week with that threefold recovery of Peter and commissioning.

But I do think the assurance that the Lord was with them here will give way to the activity that he has for them next week. But the assurance here is really centered on the fact that he fed them.

verse 12 or 13, he took the bread and gave it to them and so with the fish.

Jesus fed his own again. He feeds us. What a wonderful little story.

[23 : 48] What a timely word from the Lord. For many who are wondering, what is he doing?

The question of the text is pulling us from simply a consideration of that you believe to now we really know.

I was in the building yesterday. I'd gone over to take a walk with my son and grandson.

And, you know, things, boy, we've had a lot going on. And there's certainly enough in life to discourage anyone, correct? Am I preaching to you yet? And so I'm not immune from it, although you think I am.

And I go in the building to show my son, who was in from Indianapolis, just the space. And at the time, I didn't know it, but there were about eight or nine people there when we arrived.

[25 : 03] And they were just getting rid of old chairs so that new seats might refresh the hearts of the coming generation.

And I know there are men and women in this congregation who were over there every week. And what their labor did for my life was reaffirm that the Lord, who seemingly is hundreds of yards off, has been refocused in my mind to preparation is already in play.

this is a text for the church. Thomas was a text for the skeptic.

The first Easter night text was a text for the fearful. This is a text for you. Futility?

Utility? Find another lake? just do what you do.

[26 : 24] May he bring fullness, a fullness that's unforgettable. May he restore unto you fellowship.

May he feed you. for without that, we're not ready for next week. He feeds them so that they would feed others.

Our Heavenly Father, strengthen your church all around the globe as she languishes challenges in a challenge of belief.

Help us to sit with you and be fed. In Christ's name, amen. Amen.