

Fishing and Feeding

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[0 : 00] Last week, our son turned 16. I feel so old. I realise, I get for those who are older, that it's all relative.

But he can now legally go for his learner's permit and drive a car. I'm not sure I'm ready for that. I'm not sure our car is ready for that. No, no, I'm sure he'll be great.

But for his birthday, he wanted to watch Lord of the Rings, which is filmed in the spectacular New Zealand countryside, although it's not a movie for the faint-hearted.

It was this one, Return of the King, on the next slide. That's what he watched. Now, spoiler alert, the goodies win. But like a lot of movies, after the big battle scene, there is this movie postscript, if you like, that wraps up all the loose ends.

So, you can see Aragorn become king, who gets the woman. And then the hobbits return home.

And racy head is Sam and Rosie, who finally get married.

[1 : 09] And the question for us here this morning, though, is that what John 21 is like? Is that all it is, a mere movie postscript? After all, last weekend was the big finale, wasn't it?

We saw that Jesus really had risen from the dead, which means Jesus really had paid for our sins at the cross. You can't conquer death unless you first pay for sin, can you?

I think I mentioned it before, it's like baking a cake. You stay with me. You mix the ingredients together, and then you put it in the oven, the tomb. And you don't know if it's really worked until you take it out of the tomb and see it risen.

Well, so also with Jesus. Seeing him risen from the tomb means that his death really worked. And so last weekend, Good Friday was the big battle where it really worked.

And Easter Sunday was proof of his victory. The real goody, Jesus Christ, had won. So John could have finished his book then, couldn't he?

[2 : 21] After all, the disciples saw the risen Jesus. They believed in him, even Thomas eventually. Jesus commissioned them to go out into the world. And John finished chapter 20 with his purpose statement for the book, the end.

But then he writes chapter 21. Why? Is it just a mere movie postscript, wrapping up a few loose ends of the story, and giving us a glimpse of their life after Christ's victory?

Well, I want to suggest this morning, as we look at it more closely, it's more than that. It shows us how Jesus continues to shepherd his sheep, and how we are to live life after his victory.

In other words, it doesn't just describe life after that first Easter. It gives us encouragement to live it. And it begins with Jesus revealing himself again to his disciples.

So on the screen is point one of the outline. Just a reminder that each week you can download the outlines from the website via the link. That's just under the heading.

[3 : 34] But for now, point one on the outline and verse one in your Bibles. Afterward, Jesus appeared again to his disciples. By the Sea of Galilee, it happened this way.

Actually, the NIV obscures it a little bit. So on the next slide, this is what John literally wrote. He says, After these things, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, or Galilee.

He revealed himself in this way. And at the end of this section, it's still on the same slide, in verse 14, it says, Now this, the third time, Jesus was revealed to his disciples, being raised from the dead. You see, it's quite clear that this section of the chapter is all about Jesus revealing himself to his disciples. And we'll find out why in a little while. But John tells us for the moment it happened this way.

Verse 2, Now some suggest here that Peter is doing the wrong thing.

[5 : 04] And they say it shows us Peter in a negative light, because like the hobbits, he's gone back to his old life of fishing rather than going out preaching. But the other Gospels tell us, on the next slide, that Jesus told them to go to Galilee and basically wait to see him there.

And so I take it that's what they're doing. They're in Galilee, waiting to see Jesus. But you see, because Peter is a doer, he finds it hard to wait patiently.

I don't know if you're like that. I am a bit. I remember a few years ago, I came off my bike. You might remember that. But anyway, I was taken to hospital to check to see if I had any brain injury.

I can hear my kids at home saying, oh, that explains everything. But no, I was fine. I had some cracked ribs and a badly grazed shoulder. And so I was set up in the emergency room and the nurse brought in some antiseptic and some gauze for a dressing.

But then she left. And she was taking so long to come back. I thought, oh, forget this. And I just started dressing my shoulder myself. That's Peter. In fact, I'm not even sure he cared if he didn't catch anything as long as he was doing something.

[6 : 19] Either way, this action of Peter's provides an opportunity for Jesus. See verses four to six. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, friends, haven't you any fish? No, they answered. He said, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. When they didn't, they were unable to haul.

Sorry, when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Here is another miracle. And as I mentioned last week, this is the precisely the sort of thing you'd expect from someone claiming to be the son of God, the Lord of the world.

I mean, he's not much of a law of the world if he's not even the Lord of the sea and in control of fish, is he? But this miracle is what Jesus uses to reveal himself to his disciples.

Why? Well, so that they may know he is the living Lord. Again, the NIV obscures it a bit. But verse four on the next slide, John literally writes, In other words, everything Jesus does is so that they may know it is him, the Lord, really risen from the dead.

[7 : 48] And after the miracle, John does know. Have a look at verse seven. Then the disciples who the disciple whom Jesus loved, that's John, said to Peter, it is the Lord.

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, it is the Lord. He wrapped his outer garment around him for he had taken it off and jumped into the water. 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.

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread. Do you notice here in verse seven that we're told twice it is the Lord?

Jesus reveals himself to them that they may know he is really risen from the dead. By the way, it sounds like it sounds a bit odd that Peter puts on his outer garment to then go swimming, doesn't it? But it's likely he didn't have much on at all. One commentator suggests that he was actually fishing naked. Either way, putting on his garment was a decency thing.

[9 : 00] Although it wasn't very decent of him to leave the rest of his mates bringing the fish in, was it? But either way, they all arrive and Jesus already has a fire going to warm them with some bread and fish to feed them.

So verse 10 to 14, we continue to read that Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish you have caught. So include that in the barbecue. So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore.

Now, it was full of large fish, 153. But even with so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. None of the disciples did ask him, who are you?

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

Now, presumably, the adrenaline is still pumping in Peter because he seems to single-handedly carry the net ashore. And then obviously, someone counts the fish.

[10 : 11] People wonder why you would on earth count the fish. But we count records all the time. I mean, the kids last weekend, no doubt, had counted how many Easter eggs they hauled in last Sunday.

Or when we have the Olympics, the Olympians are counted in how many feet they jump and so on. So it's natural for these men to count this record haul of fish.

But notice Jesus acts like a shepherd here. He's serving them and feeding them breakfast. But he's also feeding them encouragement and confidence.

Because at the end of verse 12, remember, it says, They knew it was the Lord. You see, Jesus reveals himself a third time so that they may know it is the Lord, that he really is risen from the dead.

You see, we've got to remember that we've had 2,000 years for the resurrection to sink in. We've had a whole stack more evidence to know that he has really risen from the dead.

[11:17] These men have only had a few weeks and two appearances. What's more, Jesus told them last week on the next slide. So the next slide.

Jesus said that as the Father has sent me, I am sending you. In other words, Jesus has a job for them to do, to go out into the world and to preach about the risen Jesus.

But it won't be easy. The world will often hate them and many just won't believe them. So here is Jesus to strengthen them, you see.

For he reveals himself a third time so that they may know it is the Lord, really risen from the dead. And therefore confidently proclaim, as the outline says on the next slide, confidently proclaim the word about him.

Here is Jesus shepherding his first disciples. Not just feeding them fish for breakfast, but feeding them encouragement for their life of witness after his victory at Easter.

[12:28] For us though, this appearance also helps us to know it really is the Lord, risen from the dead. So that we can confidently believe their word about him.

And perhaps even share their word about him. Because for some, like Thomas last week, believing in a risen Jesus seems too far-fetched, doesn't it?

In terms of fishing, this is how we're talking about fishing. You know, the resurrection to many, it sounds like a fisherman saying, I caught a fish this big. Yeah, right. But here is more evidence. Here is another appearance. Here is another eyewitness event. And again, notice the details that speak to its truth.

Details like how John mentions Peter putting on some clothes. A detail we probably could have done without. Or how we are told that there are only a hundred yards from the shore in verse 8.

[13:31] Or later on, how the net did not break. Or how in verse 11, there is 153 fish. Why such an odd number? Because that's how many there were.

That kind of detail tells us that they were there. That they're telling the truth. Certainly, John has written this book that we may know it's the truth.

I mean, just come to me towards the end of the chapter. Verse 24. Have a look at verse 24. This is the disciple. This is John who's following. Peter will come to him later.

But this is the disciple who testifies to these things. And who wrote them down. This is John in his book. And we, John speaking in the third person, know that his testimony is true.

Jesus did many other things as well. If any one of them were written down, I suppose that not even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. You see, what we are reading is truth.

[14:34] And again, this eyewitness appearance helps us to know with the details that it's true. In fact, these multiple appearances and the details are part of the reason why even an atheist historian called Gerd Luderman, on the next slide, he says this.

He says, An atheist historian says this.

Of course, for him, he explains it by saying they were all hallucinations. But really? The same hallucination on multiple weeks, over multiple weeks, multiple times, by multiple people?

As another historian said, that's actually more unbelievable than the resurrection itself. Now, Jesus reveals himself a third time, so that the disciples may know he is the living Lord and confidently proclaim the word about him, and so that we may know he is the living Lord and confidently believe the word about him.

And so the question for our first point is, do you believe? The Christian faith is not blind faith.

[16:03] It's reasonable faith. Faith based on reason and evidence. Do you believe? If you don't and you'd like to find out more, please email me or Vijay.

And for us who do believe, then Jesus continues to shepherd us too, giving us encouragement to live life after his victory that first Easter.

And he does this by restoring Peter. So at point two on the slide, and then verses 15 to 17 in your Bibles. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, he said. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He answered, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, Take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him, the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things.

[17:08] You know that I love you. Jesus said, Feed my sheep. And there is a few things here. First, Peter is called Simon, son of John.

The last time Jesus called Peter, that was back in chapter one on the next slide, when they first met. And Jesus changed his name to Peter.

It's as though Jesus is starting again with Peter. And having a fresh start, if you like. A second in verse 15, he asked Peter in front of the other disciples, if he loves Jesus more than these other disciples.

Because in the past, Peter was not backward in coming forward, in declaring his love for Jesus. Was he? Like when Jesus washed the disciples' feet, it was Peter who said, No, no, no.

Don't, you'll never wash my feet. Or when Jesus said in front of the other disciples, that they cannot follow him, it was Peter who said, Ah, I'll lay down my life for you, Jesus. Or when Jesus said that they all fall away, on account of him, it was Peter in front of the disciples who said, No, even if they fall away, I will never fall away.

[18:19] Peter was never backward in coming forward, in front of these others. But notice this time, he doesn't do it. Peter, do you love me more than these? Not, Yes, I love you more than these, but yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

There's a change here. A third and most obviously, Jesus asked Peter this question three times, doesn't he? Why? Well, what did Peter do to Jesus three times?

That's right, he denied Jesus three times. In fact, on the next slide, we read that it was while Peter was warming himself, around a fire, that he denied Jesus.

And here they are on the beach, around a fire again, and Jesus is asking him three times, Do you love me? That's the connection.

And it's not to get Peter back, but it's to deal with his denial, and have a fresh start. And Peter seems to start to get the connection, because he's hurt in verse 17.

[19:24] But Jesus also restores Peter through this process, doesn't he? Because each time, he both gives Peter the opportunity to publicly repent, just as he publicly denied, to each time express his love, and then each time, to be given the responsibility, and privilege, of feeding Jesus' sheep.

And we know Peter is restored, and we know it is a privilege, because do you notice what Jesus calls these sheep? He says, My lambs, My sheep.

These are his, they are precious to him. And Jesus is concerned for them, that they be fed, and gives Peter the responsibility here, along with the other disciples, of course, to do that.

And so who are they? Well, they are us. People, young lambs and old sheep, if you like, in the faith. And as Jesus said on the next slide, he said, I am the good shepherd.

I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.

[20:45] My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

You see, the sheep are those, who will believe, and join his flock. And they are those like us, who already believe, and are part of his flock.

We are the ones, who have eternal life, whom no one can snatch, from his hand. Which is a great reassurance, isn't it? And in our passage, Jesus is concerned for us.

He is concerned, that we continue, to be fed. For this is part of the way, that he keeps us, from perishing, and keeps us, from being snatched, from his hand.

He is concerned, that he continues, to shepherd us, as God promised, he would, in our first reading. He is concerned, that we continue, to hear his voice, in life, after his victory, that first Easter.

[21:52] How? Well, through his apostles, like Peter, and their word, about Jesus. That's why for Peter, loving Jesus, means feeding us.

Not with grass, of course, but with the word, about Jesus. With Jesus' voice, so to speak. And that's why, I often take you, whenever I can, through the Bible passage, to help you see it, for yourself, rather than just, hit highlights.

It's not always, possible to do that, but I want you to hear, not my voice, but God's voice, or the shepherd's voice. I want you, I want to model, reading through a passage, so you can do it, for yourself.

Because this is how, Jesus continues, to shepherd us. This is how, he continues to feed us, and encourages us, in life, after his victory, that first Easter.

For he's concerned, that we might follow him, even till our death, like Peter. See verse 18? Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself, and went where you wanted.

[23 : 03] But when you, Peter, are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else, will dress you, and lead you, where you do not, want to go. Jesus said this, to indicate the kind of death, by which Peter, would glorify God.

Then Jesus said to him, follow me. Jesus speaks, of Peter's death, doesn't he? For when Peter is older, he will stretch out his arms, on a cross beam, dressed by others, in terms of, being tied, to the wooden cross beam, and led out, where he doesn't want to go, to his death.

In fact, the church historian, early church historian, Eusebius, says Peter was crucified, by Nero, upside down. Whether it was, upside down or not, Peter will die, for Jesus.

But until then, Peter must, follow him. And at this point, in our passage, it seems, Jesus gets up, from breakfast, and starts to walk, along the beach, and says to Peter, follow me.

But like, when Jesus called Peter, back in chapter one, this is, more than a chord, for Peter to simply, follow along the beach, it's symbolically, for Peter to follow Jesus, in life, until his death.

[24 : 22] And we know this, because he says it again, have a look at verses 20, to 22. Peter turned, they're walking down the beach now, Peter turned, and saw that the disciple, whom Jesus loved, that's John, was following them.

This was the one, who had leaned back, against Jesus at the supper, and asked, Lord, who is going to betray you? When Peter saw John, he asked, Lord, what about him?

Jesus answered, if I want him, to remain alive, until I return, what is that to you? You, must follow, me. Here, John seems to get up, from breakfast, and start to follow, Jesus and Peter.

But Peter starts, wondering about John. You know, if Peter's going to die, for Jesus, in verse 21, then Peter says, well, what about him? But Jesus says, don't worry about him, you just follow me.

It seems, by the way, that Jesus' comment, about John, led to a rumour, that John would stay alive, until Jesus returned. A rumour, that John ties up now, verse 23.

[25 : 28] Because of this, the rumour spread, among the believers, that this disciple, John, would not die. But Jesus did not say, that he would not die, he only said, if I want him, to remain alive, until I return, what is that, to you?

So John, does tie up, a couple of loose ends, in this chapter. But the point here, is that Peter, is not to worry, about others, in terms of, comparing himself, to them.

Instead, Jesus says, you must follow, me. And it's a good reminder, for us, not to play, the comparison game, with others. Because we can, can't we? We can wonder, what about that person, God?

Why is my life, harder than their life? Or why does that person, have those blessings, and I don't? Or why do I struggle, in this way, following Jesus, when that person, doesn't?

Which is silly, because it assumes, we know, what everyone struggles, with when we don't. But I suspect, God's answer, might be the same, as Jesus is here.

[26 : 33] Don't worry about them, you just follow, me. Unlike Peter, we are to follow Christ, in life, until our death, however it comes.

For he is worth, following. He is the good shepherd, who laid down, his life for us, that very first, Good Friday, and really did rise, as Lord, that very first, Easter Sunday, revealing himself, on multiple occasions, to multiple people, so that we can know, and confidently believe, in him. What's more, he continues, to shepherd us, by his apostles word, about him, to feed us, and encourage us, in life, after his victory, that Easter.

For he is concerned, for us, that we may follow him, till death. So on the slide, the outline question, for this point, we've only got two points today, don't worry, but the question is, will you be fed?

In fact, will you, help others to be fed? Will you, will we continue, to listen, to his voice, in his word, written by his apostles, like Peter and John?

[27 : 45] I know it's not always easy, but there are, resources to help you. Michelle, has already emailed out, family Bible studies, that families can use, with their kids.

Or, we've just had Easter, and I have access, to nine daily, devotional readings, on the atonement, because of Easter, that you can feed on. I didn't write them, but I have permission, to share them. And it does work. I was speaking with, an older person, from our church, who is feeling isolated, they're kind of locked down, in the aged care centre, that they live at. And we got a copy, of these readings, to him.

And he rang me, and said how encouraged, he was by them. He was fed, you see. Or like this book, on the next slide. I mentioned it, a couple of weeks ago, I've got a whole box, full of them. Right here, here's a whole box, full of them. So, grab one of these, it just goes through, ten psalms, in the Bible, to feed you. I can either, sell them to you, for five bucks each, or give them to you, if you're going to give them back, and give it to someone else.

[28 : 55] And I'm only going to charge you, five bucks, because that way, I know you'll, you know, read it. You're not going to waste your money, I hope. I can recommend other books, of course, to you, to help read the Bible, if you're interested.

You can buy them, and have them delivered. Yes, buy. Because if we are willing to spend money, on food to feed us physically, then how much more so, should we be willing to spend money, on food to feed us spiritually?

For this is how we listen, to our shepherd's voice. This is how, Jesus continues to shepherd us, his sheep, to feed us, and encourage us, to follow him. Let me close, with this video, with this video, that I saw, about what we feed on.

Take a look. In Matthew chapter 6, it says, who by worrying, can add to their life? A pandemic, do not worry about tomorrow, pagans run after these things.

A national emergency. Philippians 4 says, do not be anxious, about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God, and the peace of God, which transcends, all understanding, will guard your hearts, and your minds, in Christ Jesus.

[30 : 08] An interesting fact, about humanity, is that whatever you feed, grows. A financial pandemic. If you feed your faith, it grows. If you feed your fears, they grow.

It's all spiraled, very quickly. It's going to get worse. Some have to live, and some have to die.

Realize that our time, is better spent, talking to the Father, than getting all worked up, and reading, and feeding our minds, with the news, and the media, about what everybody, is saying, about how this is doom, and gloom, and how money, which we have hoped in, is lost.

Hope not in money. Hope in your Father, your God, Jesus Christ, your Savior. Have your faith, and use it. Walk according to it.

Whatever you feed, grows. If you feast, on the Word of God, and you renew your minds, around the truth, your faith, it gets bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

But if you go to the news, and you read, and you read, article after article, after quote, after talking heads, and you continue, to feed those fears, they grow, and get bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

[31 : 18] Whatever you feed, grows. Today, did you wake up this morning, and feast, on the Word of God, and go to Him, in prayer?

Or, did you feed your fears? Now, it's not as though, we can never, watch the news, or Netflix, or anything else, but the question is, what do we feed on more?

That stuff, or God's Word? Well, let me finish. John 21 is, much more than a mere, movie, postscript. For it doesn't just, describe a life, after Christ's victory, that first Easter, but it shows us, our shepherd's concern, to keep feeding us.

It gives us the encouragement, to keep living, out that life, after His victory, feeding on His Word, that we may continue, to follow Him, till our death, or His return.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you, for your Word. We thank you, that it points us, to your Son, the Good Shepherd.

[32 : 32] We thank you, that He is concerned, to encourage us, and continue to feed us. And so we pray, that you would help us, to accept that food, to keep feeding, on His Word, that we may always, follow Him in life, till His death, or return.

We ask it, in His name. Amen.