Breakfast with Jesus

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[0:00] Let us now turn to the Gospel according to John, chapter 21. The Gospel according to John, chapter 21.

After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. And on this wise showed he himself that were together Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately.

And that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shove.

But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, Have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

But he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore. And now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Therefore that disciple, whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he geared his fishers coat unto him, for he was naked, and had cast himself into the sea.

And the other disciples came in a little ship. For they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits, dragging the net with fishes.

Soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, and hundred and fifty and three. And for all there was so many, yet was not the net broken.

[2:36] Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? Knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead.

Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his truth. Let us further sing to his praise from Psalm 47, and at verse 5.

Psalm 47, and at verse 5. God is with shouts gone up, The Lord with trumpets sounding high.

Sing praise to God, sing praise, sing praise. Praise to our King, sing ye. For God is King of all the earth, With knowledge praise express.

[3:50] God rules the nations. God sits on his throne of holiness. The princes of the people are assembled willingly, Even of the God of Abraham, They who the people be.

For why? The shields that do defend the earth are only his. They to the Lord belong. Yea, he exalted greatly is.

Let us sing these verses. God is with shouts gone up. God is with shouts gone up. God is with shouts gone up.

The Lord with trumpets sounding high. Sing praise to God, Sing praise, sing praise.

Praise to our King, sing ye. For God is King of all the earth, With knowledge praise express.

[5:16] God rules the nations. God sits on his throne of holiness.

The princes of the people are assembled willingly, Even of the God of Abraham, They who the people be.

For why? For why? The shields that do defend the earth are only his.

They to the Lord belong. They to the Lord belong. Ye ye. Exalted greatly is.

Let us now turn to the passage that we read. The Gospel according to John, chapter 21.

[6:50] And we may read again at the beginning of the chapter. After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples of the Sea of Tiberias.

And on this wise, he showed he himself. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians in the first letter, tells of the Gospel that he proclaimed amongst the people of Corinth.

Now, I would remind you, brothers, of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

And it would appear from what Paul writes that there were those who were querying the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And so Paul reiterates, for their benefit, that what he had preached was not something that he had made up, but that which he had received.

[8:14] He stresses the importance and significance of the death, burial, and resurrection of God's Messiah. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, he says, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Paul wanted them and us to realize the importance of the resurrection. Without the resurrection, sinners would be still in their sins.

Without the resurrection, sinners would still be unsaved. Without the resurrection, they would be of all men most miserable.

And he reminds them and us of those who could testify to having met the risen, resurrected Christ. This morning, we noted how the risen Christ made himself known to the group of disciples gathered together behind locked doors.

Well, this evening, I wish to focus on another post-resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. John tells us in the passage that we read that this was the third time that Jesus showed himself or revealed himself to the disciples.

[9:56] John informs us of the location and the manner in which Jesus revealed himself. After these things, Jesus showed himself again, or Jesus revealed himself to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and on this wise, showed himself or revealed himself.

Well, three thoughts. First, the location. Secondly, the resolution. And thirdly, the lessons that may be learned.

First, the location.

From the great high priest. You remember in the Old Testament, when the high priest went to minister into the Holy of Holies, he had bells on the bottom of his garment, on the hem of his garment.

And people could hear him move as he went into the most holy place and sprinkled the blood. They knew by the sound of the bells that the high priest was alive.

[11:34] And when he came out, it would be a huge measure of relief to them that the sacrifice that had been offered up was accepted and the sins forgiven.

He pronounced the Aaronic benediction. But this high priest of the New Testament, there was no sound, no indication of life for three days.

And you remember what some of those who followed the Lord said, we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Now, their interpretation of redeeming Israel is not quite the biblical interpretation. But their hope doesn't appear to be realized.

And so, you remember the first words that he spoke in that room as we saw this morning. Shalom. Peace to you.

[12:39] Peace to you. The sacrifice has been accepted. The sins are forgiven. And he has come to bring life.

How important then to know that Jesus is alive and risen in power. Well, the location here is the Sea of Tiberias.

That's just another name for the Sea of Galilee. And it was probably not a name that was in usage until a much later time than when the ministry of Christ actually occurred.

As we know, John wrote his gospel long after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And by that time, the usage of the name Tiberias had come into use.

And I think I ought to mention something else in passing. And that is John's usage of the term showed himself or revealed.

[13:48] It is a common theme in his gospel in reference to Jesus' manifestation in the days of his flesh.

For example, John the Baptist tells why Jesus came. For this purpose, I came baptizing with water. That he, that is Jesus, that Jesus might be revealed in Israel.

In the first sign recorded in this gospel, the changing of, remember, at the wedding of Cana in Galilee. And he changed the water into wine.

The first of his signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee. And revealed or showed his glory. Throughout his ministry, which climaxed on the cross, Jesus revealed his Father's name.

I have revealed your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. And here in his resurrection body, he reveals himself.

[14:58] This was now the third time that Jesus showed himself or was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Now remember he had told them prior to his crucifixion, After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

This directive was reinforced by the angel's message to the women. At the empty tomb, go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

There you will see him just as he told you. Now, for these men who were mostly from that area, Galilee was home.

And there is something about going home, isn't there? I think islanders from this island in particular understand that.

[16:04] Even although their main place of residence might be in a town or city on the mainland, it is still going home when they travel to the island here.

And that is true even for many exiles who have made their homes in other countries. They still think of coming to the island as going home.

Going home holds a powerful influence over the lives of islanders. And in Galilee, their home area of the disciples was where the Lord had performed notable miracles of healing, deliverance and raising from the dead.

On one shore of the sea of Galilee, for example, Jesus met a man dominated by the powers of darkness.

A man indwelt by a legion of demons who was marvelously set free or liberated by Christ. On the other shore of the sea of Galilee, he performed the miracle of feeding 5,000, after which he delivered the discourse on the bread of life.

[17:25] It was by the shore of the sea of Galilee that he called Peter, James and John to become fishers of men. So, can we doubt, but that the Lord had a deep purpose and meaning in appearing to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias or the sea of Galilee?

Can we doubt, but that he meant to remind them of all they had seen in former days, of his wisdom, love and power by the side of and indeed even on these waters that were so well known to these men?

J.C. Royal, Bishop Royal, makes the observation, he knew well the influence, that is, Jesus knew well the influence, which scenery and places exercise over the mind of man.

He would recall to the memory of his disciples all that they had witnessed in the early days of his ministry, where he had begun with them. There he would have one of his last interviews with them before his ascension.

It is not therefore surprising that having been told to report in the region of Galilee, Peter and those disciples with him returned to the lake, where formerly they had worked and where Jesus had called them to become fishers of men.

[19:11] The location, you might say, a place of fragrant memories for these disciples. Now, you can apply that.

There are some locations in your own life, places that hold, that you hold dear. places that hold many special memories for you, because of the association that you have with these places.

That's how it was, I believe, with these disciples. And that leads me to the second point, to the resolution. You notice, John informs us of the identity of five of the disciples in the group.

He tells us there was Simon, Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathaniel of Cana and Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, James and John.

And two other, he says, of his disciples. Seven in total. And you know how seven in Scripture is regarded as the perfect number.

[20 : 35] Perfect number of a group of imperfect men. And in this cross-section of disciples, there is, as it were, a mini-portrait of the Church of Christ.

The list of names is headed by the one who denied his Lord, Simon Peter. Another who makes up the group had persisted in stubborn, determined unbelief, Thomas.

And you remember how he stubbornly refused to believe the testimony of his fellow disciples, until he himself was confronted by the risen Christ.

Except, remember what he said, except I shall see. In his hands the print of the nails, put my finger in the print of the nails, thus my, I will not believe.

And eight days after this, Jesus confronted Thomas. And you remember what he said to him, Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

[21:55] So, you had Thomas in the group, and then you had Nathaniel. You might say a quiet, reflective person.

And then you had the combative personalities of the sons of thunder, the sons of Zebedee, James and John.

And strangely, John would have known the identity of two others, but their names are not even mentioned.

It's as if they were such background figures that he doesn't even bother to mention their names. One commentator, a man by the name of James Boyce, makes the observation, These are the ones, he says, who do Christian work.

Normal people, with all the failings that we are here to. Not fictitious characters of superhuman faith and fortitude.

[23:05] In other words, they are largely anonymous. And yet, they are vital in the ongoing work of the Church.

And these men were now gathered and united as sinners, cleansed of their sins through Christ's atoning death, renewed by faith in their resurrected Lord.

And their presence here, surely testimony to God's sustaining grace and Christ's persevering mercy.

Those whom Jesus has called, whatever their failings by his Holy Spirit, through his word, will always be his and will persevere to the end. And so you find the resolution.

Of course, Peter is the leader. I'm going fishing, he says. Now, when Peter says that he's going fishing, it's not like the kind of thing that people may do on an evening or a Saturday from the 15th of March onwards, going to a favorite loch or a river, or even to the rocks to do some fishing.

[24:21] When Peter says, I'm going fishing, it's not like, you know, just a hobby, or that he wants to be alone, or that he wants to be with his friends.

That's not what Peter is talking about. This was the way that Peter earned his living. It was his career. That's what he did. This is what he knew something about.

You know, if you go around and ask people, what do you do? Some might say in response, well, I'm a teacher. I teach pupils.

Some might say I'm a nurse or a carer. I attend to the sick or the housebound. I work in residential care. Some might say I'm a doctor. I'm a tradesman, a mechanic.

In the oil industry, on rigs, a digger operator, an IT or broadcasting, a weaver, a crafter, a driving instructor, whatever. But were you to ask Simon Peter, how do you do?

[25:25] And Simon Peter would say, I am a fisherman. That's what I do. I catch fish. I know something about fishing. And so do you understand the significance of what Peter is saying here?

Here is a man who has failed, and he's failed miserably. He's failed the Lord. He's failed Jesus. Is there anyone here this evening who doesn't understand what it means to fail?

Not just to fail at some task or other, but to fail in your discipleship, to let Jesus down, to promise Jesus something, and then catastrophically and publicly let him down.

the sense of failure. And you know, that can cripple some people. There are some people, if they had done what Peter had done, they would never get over it.

There are some people in therapy for the rest of their lives because of their sense of failure. they can't wake up, or they feel they can't wake up in the morning, that they can't get through the day.

[26:34] They can't face life without this crippling, debilitating thought that they've let the Savior down. So here is Simon Peter.

How could he ever be an apostle? How could he ever be useful in the kingdom of God ever again, having done what he had done? And so Simon says, I'm going fishing.

Because at least he thought that he knew something about fishing. That's something with which I'm familiar. It's something that I know.

I'm sure Simon Peter could talk to you with great expertise about the various weather patterns and the hills that surround the Sea of Galilee, especially to the north and the east, and how sudden temperature changes and pressure changes can trigger storms.

He would know when storms were about to come. He knew the pattern of fish movements. But yet here, John tells, they fish all night and they catch nothing.

[27:44] A night of empty nets. A night of hard work. And now the day is breaking and they have nothing to show. For their night's work.

And you see what happens. At dawn, a shadowy figure is seen on the shore. About a hundred yards away on the beach and a voice shouts out, you know, have you caught something?

Children, have you any meat? Could be translated, it's not really meat they were looking for, but fish. Have you any fish? And you know, if Simon Peter had actually caught something, the question might not be as irritating.

But when you do serious fishing, if you haven't caught something, it can be most disheartening. I can't speak from experience. Closest I've ever come to doing any serious fishing was for a few years.

In the summer, I used to bait and set small lines in Broad Bay. There would be at least 300 hooks on the small line.

[28:56] And I had one and my late father-in-law had another. And with my brother-in-law, we used to come down with a little boat as far as Glen Tolstow.

It was a lot of work. Sometimes it was very fruitless. You had to procure the bait. You had to bait all these hooks. And then when you came ashore, you had to clean them all.

Remove the bait off them. And leave them for the next time. So, here is Peter. Peter. And he has caught nothing.

And perhaps this nagging thought is growing in his mind. Because he's caught absolutely nothing. And the voice says, drop your nets on the other side of the boat.

Who is this man? How does he know what we don't know? They had been there all night trying to catch and they caught nothing. And the voice from the shore said, cast the net on the right side of the boat.

[30:10] And you see, it's not empty advice. It's not advice given without a promise. There is a definite promise attached to the advice and you shall find.

And somehow, you might like to see the expression on the face of Simon Peter when he threw these nets down on the other side of the boat and suddenly he begins to feel the tension in the nets as the live fish are filling the net.

The twitching of the net being pulled hither and thither. The boiling of the water. And he can sense that this isn't just two or three fish. There's a lot of fish here. And it's John, the author of the gospel, who recognizes the identity of the person giving advice that this is Jesus.

Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. And you know, there you see the quick-witted perception of love.

Love recognizes the Savior in the life of John. He probably recalls the previous incident that is recorded for us in Luke chapter 5.

[31 : 40] He also believed when he saw the clothes and the empty tomb. And so John says, It is the Lord. It's not just the cry of recognition, but it seems to me it's a eulogy of praise.

It is the Lord. The praise all belongs to Him. Until then, they had not known that He had come to meet.

He had come there to meet with them. And some very esteemed theologians would contend that He was there all night, unseen and unknown.

And you know, I am sure there are some here who can testify to the fact of their lack of awareness of the presence of the Lord and yet of their belief that the Lord is there.

He was waiting for this to happen before He revealed Himself to them again. And there are times in the lives of believers many times when He is unseen and unknown and there and aware of His presence.

[33:02] Remember Jacob, surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it. And so you see Simon Peter, impetuous Peter, look before you leap, Simon Peter.

He puts on his outer garment because he had stripped because he was fishing. He leaps into the water and half wading and half swimming. perhaps on half trying to walk.

He's making his way to Jesus. So the resolution to fish helps them to find Jesus.

The location, a place of sacred memories. And then finally the lesson. What's the lesson? Well, it seems to me there are several lessons.

There's a wonderful lesson and it's a humbling lesson and it's a painful lesson. Jesus would not allow Simon Peter to catch one solitary fish because that was not what Jesus wanted him to do.

[34:17] Some would contend and argue strongly that in going fishing in a sense Simon Peter is running away.

Running away from his duties. That he's trying to go back to his former way of life and it's as though Jesus is saying to him, no, you want to catch fish?

You will only catch fish but at my bidding. You'll catch more fish than you ever dreamed of but only at my bidding because I'm in control of the whole of the universe.

I control even the movement of fish. And as the sovereign Lord he saw to it that the nets were empty after their night on the lake of Galilee.

Now, personally I'm not convinced that this episode that is recorded here is an indication that the disciples were abandoning their calling.

[35:23] But what does come across is this that they were working according to their own knowledge and their own skill and their own power.

That's what they were used to. And Jesus is teaching a lesson here that in the spiritual realm and the work of the kingdom the rule is this apart from me you can do nothing.

Apart from me you can do nothing. Now, that's a lesson that's not always easy to learn because sometimes we're so confident of our own abilities and our own capabilities and our own gifts and so on.

well here is a man who thought he knew what fishing was about and Jesus is teaching him a very valuable lesson apart from me you can do nothing.

We need the power and the energy of the Holy Spirit to bring home the truth to eliminate sin darkened minds and hearts.

[36:41] and then the second lesson is this the lesson of obedience to the word of Christ. It's not a case of doing it Peter's way or my way but doing it Christ's way.

Now, I've already touched on this in the first point cast the net on the right side of the boat is the advice of Christ and it's advice with a definite promise and you will find some.

it wasn't a haphazard random exercise but a command with a promise attached. Oh, what a difference when one is doing the will of Christ and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

before they had gone out in their own knowledge dependent on their own skills and they had been casting their nets in accordance with the instruction and the command of Christ they weren't able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

And you see, that lesson teaches us that evangelism must therefore prayerfully rely on Christ's leading and blessing with careful resolve to obey God's word in everything.

[38:21] Psalmist reminds us in Psalm 19 in keeping his commandments there is great reward. When they hauled the net ashore there were 153 fish.

Why this number? Well, I have no answer to that specific number. There have been some very inventive and highly imaginative explanations for this specific number, but I have to say that if there is some symbolism intended, I have not found it.

But what I will focus your attention on is this. For all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. This is what John draws our attention to.

Tells of these fishes, and yet he says was not the net. The net didn't tear. Now, remember the incident in Luke's Gospel.

They enclosed a large number of fish and the nets were breaking. But here John seems anxious to tell us despite the strain on the net, the net was not torn.

[39:32] Does this suggest that the Gospel net never breaks, never tears? no limit to the number of converts, humanly speaking?

I'm not sure. But do you notice in the story, and John makes it very, very clear. Read the text very carefully. You know, Jesus says bring the fish because they're going to have breakfast.

So, it's a wonderful sin, by the way. This is Jesus in his resurrection body and he's having breakfast. And John draws our attention to an extraordinary fact.

Jesus already had fish on the fire. He already had fish on the fire. Even though he says to Simon Peter bring your fish, he has already got the fish that they were going to eat for breakfast.

Now, that's a little detail. It's a small detail. But do you see how Jesus is sort of rubbing it in a little bit? That even the fish they're going to enjoy for breakfast isn't the fish that Peter and his fellow disciples had caught.

[40:44] It's got nothing to do with them. It's all to do with the supply and providence and governance and control of Jesus. How Jesus puts a boundary and a hedge around our lives.

And it's as though he's saying to Peter, ask the disciple who's trying to run away, I'm not going to let you run away because I've got something for you to do. And that seems to me wonderfully encouraging.

He has let the Savior down, but Jesus won't let him run away because running away is never the answer. Running back to your former life is not the answer.

Going off by yourself and having a pity party is not the answer. here, every step of the way, the Lord is watching over Peter.

But in order to do that, notice what Jesus does. He has to humble Peter. He has to humble him. It's as though even though Peter has met the Lord in the encounter that Luke talks about and I mentioned this morning, there's still more humbling for Jesus to do in the life and heart of Simon Peter.

[42:09] It's about Jesus pricking the balloon of pride and revealing to us how small we really are, how little we are, how without him we can do nothing.

Peter couldn't even catch a fish, which is what he knew something about. He couldn't do that without the help and the power and the sovereignty of Christ.

You know how some clothing is labeled shrink resistant. Personally, I find that labeling comforting.

It saves me from making errors when putting laundry into the washing machine. you know how you can put laundry into the washing machine and when you take it out, it isn't the same size as when you put it in.

And sometimes it's us Christians. Maybe it's you, maybe it's me tonight. We like to think of ourselves as being shrink resistant.

[43:22] And Jesus is saying, if you're going to be useful in my kingdom, I'm going to shrink you. I'm going to make you humble. I'm going to teach you to lean and depend upon me with all your might.

Because we all need to learn our total dependence upon him. It's a second lesson. And the third one is this.

Remember that in the fishing episode to which I've referred several times in Luke's gospel, when Peter recognized the deity of Christ, he fell on his knees and he begged Jesus to leave him.

Depart from me, he said, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. He recognized the holiness of God and he confessed his sin and unworthiness. But here, where he receives further proof of the deity of Christ, he responds in a totally different way.

whereas before he begged for Jesus to leave, he now jumps into the water and heads directly towards Christ.

[44:37] What has changed in the life of this man? Has he come to realize over the intervening period that he is not really such a great sinner after all?

No, that's not the answer. It's the very opposite. He has just passed through an experience of bitter weeping through denying his Lord.

What has changed? Could I suggest that he learned the grace of God for sinners in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Remember the greeting of the Lord in the upper room. Shalom, peace to you. The silent argument, the wounds in his hands and the wounded side.

Depths of compassion extended by the risen Christ to still poor and worthy sinners like you and me. He invites us to fellowship, communion with him.

[45:44] Come and have breakfast, he says, to the returning fishermen. breakfast with Jesus, how enticing. What an attractive proposition.

Another memorable meal that would remain in the minds and hearts of the disciples. Remember there's another mentioned in Luke's Gospel, the Emmaus Road episode, supper with Jesus.

here it is breakfast, but you know, any meal in the fellowship and companionship of Christ is memorable, where his presence is known and felt and experienced.

So, in conclusion, let me ask, have you ever dined with the Lord? have you sat down to a meal with the Lord?

Have you received mercil, sweet mercil of food from the Lord? Do you remember there's an incident recorded in the scriptures about brothers who came down to Egypt?

[47:25] and they were seated at the table according to their age and it was a source of amazement to these brothers.

And the man whom they met took and sent food down to them? But Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs and they drank and were merry with them, the brothers of Joseph.

Here's the Joseph of the New Testament and I'll ask the question again, have you dined with him? Have you received from him portions like the Joseph of the Old Testament gave to his brother Benjamin?

Or are you a stranger to dining with Christ? You see, there's nothing exclusive about this dining in the sense because it is an invitation extended to all sinners.

So wherever the Lord is to be found, then we ought to strive to be there. Wherever the Lord is proclaimed, wherever his truth is set before us, then we ought to strive to be there.

[49:14] It's a place of undoubted blessing for all who trust in him. Dining with the Lord. What a privilege. Would that it was a privilege that was enjoyed by every one of us this evening.

The location, a place of fond memories. the resolution, let's go fishing, and the lessons that are learned, humbling, lessons, lessons that teach us that without Christ we can do nothing, and the privilege of dining with the Lord.

Let me ask now, what place does the resurrected Christ have in your affections tonight? Do you want to dine with him?

Do you envy those who have been brought to dine with him? Well, you know he's still asking you, come and dine.

Take up the invitation. It's not too late. Let us pray. O eternal God, we thank thee for the gracious nature and the loving nature of the invitation that is extended to the unworthy and the undeserving to dine with thee.

[50:57] Help us all to take it up and to know something of the blessing that comes from dining with the Lord.

We remember others when they realized who their dining companion was. They spoke to one another and they said did not our heart warm within us while he spoke with us on the way.

grant O Lord that none of us be strangers to that blessing and the glory shall be thine. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Let us conclude by singing to God's praise from Psalm 118. Psalm 118 at verse 22.

22.

[52:22] We from the house which to the Lord pertains you blessed have. Let us sing these verses. That stone is made head cornerstone which builders did despise.

Amen. Amen.

This is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes.

this is the day God made in it will join thy apathy.

Save now I pray thee Lord I pray send now prosperity blessed is he in God's name that cometh us to save we from the house which to the Lord pertains you blessed have now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father fellowship and communion of the

[54:28] Holy Spirit rest on and abide with you all now and forever Amen