

## Many Convincing Proofs

Last Sunday we talked about the importance of the resurrection of Jesus and its connection to His Lordship in our lives. I want to take the next couple of Sundays to focus on a couple of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Luke tells us in Acts 1 that **“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” Acts 1:3** Many convincing proofs. One of those convincing proofs involved Jesus cooking breakfast for some of the disciples and that account is found in John 21.

While you are turning there, notice what Luke said about the way Jesus spent these forty days between his resurrection and his ascension into heaven. It doesn't indicate he was telling them to “Write all this down, because you're going to need to remember this in case you start writing a book about me.” Nor was he telling them, “Now at the end of your prayer, always say ‘In Jesus name’ or it won't really be official. And when you are giving an altar call, always ask that every head be bowed and every eye closed, no one looking around.” None of that. He simply spent time with them and talked about the kingdom of God, the very thing he had been talking about for three years. It might be of some comfort to you parents that are having to be teachers right now, that Jesus thought spending time with his disciples (his students or children), and talking to them about life and about the kingdom, that was as important as making sure they memorized all the facts and could recite the commandments. You get my point. Make the most out of the time and don't stress yourself out.

The area around the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee is where much of Jesus' ministry occurred. Jesus had sent word to his disciples to go home to the Galilee and since that's where most of them were from, I'm sure they were glad to go home. Recall they had been hiding behind locked doors earlier so I'm sure they were relieved to get out of Jerusalem with their lives. They could breathe a little freer now, but I'm sure they had a lot of unanswered questions. “What now? Is Jesus going to establish his kingdom now? Do we have a role to play in it? Jesus isn't going around healing and teaching so what do we do?”

Here they are, waiting, wondering. It's in that setting John tells us, **“Afterward, Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ‘I'm going out to fish,’ Simon Peter told them, and they said,**

**‘We’ll go with you.’ So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.” John 21:1-3**

Peter examines the situation and says, “I’m not sitting around doing nothing. I’m going to work.” Keep in mind, Peter was a fisherman. This wasn’t a hobby, this was a business decision for Peter. This is what he did for a living, although for the past 3 years he had left the fishing boats behind to follow Jesus and in Jesus’ words, be a “fisher of men.” That’s why I wonder if when Peter announces he is going fishing, he is thinking in some sense of going back to his old life, back to something familiar, something that didn’t involve soldiers and an angry mob wanting to crucify you on a cross. “It was a good run with Jesus, but he’s gone, we don’t know when he is coming back and I’ve got bills to pay so I’m going back where I started, back to fishing.”

John tells us some of the other disciples who were with him decided to go as well. They fished all night but caught nothing. Apparently the best fishing in the Galilee is found in the early hours before sunrise. I don’t know what it is about fish that they can’t bother to sleep when the rest of us are sleeping. Maybe that’s why I’m not a fisherman, but regardless Peter and his pals fished all night and caught nothing. Hardly a satisfying experience. Maybe something was missing this time. It wasn’t productive. It just didn’t feel the same.

Understand, there is nothing wrong with fishing, but there is something wrong with going back to an old way of life you abandoned when Jesus called you to a new life and to follow him. Maybe that was part of the problem. Peter and the disciples were going back to something that Jesus had called them away from. How can you leave what you’ve found in Jesus to return to old habits or an old lifestyle, back to choices and influences and old haunts that you know aren’t pleasing to God? They weren’t then and they aren’t now! You’ve given your life to Jesus! How can you think of going back to an old way of life that Jesus delivered you from?

If you’ve been tempted to go back to that old life you left behind, listen to me, there is nothing back there for you. That life was empty to start with, that may be part of why you came to Jesus. The old life didn’t satisfy you then and it can’t satisfy you now. It’s as empty now as it was when you left it and surrendered your life to Jesus. You know too much. You’ve come too far to turn back. When the risen Christ has called you to follow him and has given your life meaning and purpose, you’ll never find satisfaction or purpose or meaning anywhere else. Certainly you won’t find it going back to that old way of life. Peter and his pals were fishing in

the wrong place for the wrong kind of fish and there was nothing in that lake that could satisfy the longing in their souls.

Let me say it again, the boats, the nets, the fish, there was nothing wrong with any of that. We need Christians who fish for a living. We need Christians who fish and share their catch with their pastor, thank God for you. But for Peter, fishing represented the life he lived before he met Jesus, before he knew there was one who could conquer death and the grave. These things represented part of his life B.C. - before Christ – and he was trying to go back like before, trusting in his fishing business and his nets and boats, like before. It's folly to go back to the life you had before Jesus made you alive in him.

Peter and the guys fish all night and then look at verse 4. **“Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.” John 21:4** We don't understand this bit of mystery. There was something about the resurrected Lord. Mary Magdalene didn't recognize him at the tomb until he spoke her name. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize him until he broke bread with them. The disciples recognized him in John 20, but they didn't recognize him now. Of course, he was about 100 yards away standing on the shore, so that could explain why they didn't realize it was Jesus. The truth is, they weren't alone in failing to recognize him. We've all been guilty of failing to recognize his presence and his involvement in our lives. Maybe they were too busy with their business, with the nets, with their hard work trying to catch fish so they didn't look long enough to recognize him. Too distracted, too busy to stop and see that it was Jesus on the bank.

My point is, Jesus is often at work in our life, at times and seasons and in ways that we may or may not recognize – we may or may not understand what he is doing or why he is doing it. Let me ask you, **Do you recognize Jesus at work in your life?** Is it possible that he has been at work in ways you didn't recognize? Perhaps in this pandemic, while you've been home, he's been there and you haven't seen him. You've been upset, wondering where he was, when he's been there all the time and you just didn't realize it was Jesus. Just because you can't clearly see him doesn't mean he isn't at work in your life or in your circumstances. He was cooking up something good for the disciples, literally, even though they didn't recognize or acknowledge him. You wonder where Jesus is and why he hasn't shown up in your situation, why it feels like you are all alone and all the time Jesus is busy right there on the shoreline fixing breakfast for you! Stop doubting his presence and see if you can smell breakfast cooking instead.

Notice they weren't even looking for Jesus but he came looking for them. Jesus is still seeking us out, looking to meet us where we are. Here they were, tired, frustrated, no fish, wondering where Jesus was in all of this, and all the time Jesus is there on shore, with breakfast ready for them. All they needed to do was look to him and obey his command. Look at this.

When you come up on someone fishing, what do you ask? "How's the fishing? Are they biting?" That's essentially what Jesus asked them. From about 100 yards away, on the shore, John says, **"He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?'" John 21:5**

There's a question you love to hear after fishing all night without a bite. And keep in mind, Peter and these guys were professional fishermen. Jesus registers surprise in his voice. "Haven't you any fish? After all, you've been at this for awhile haven't you?"

Have you noticed how throughout the Scripture God likes to ask questions? From the beginning in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve sinned and hid and God asked "Where are you?" to Jesus asking soldiers in the garden of Gethsemane "Who is it you want?" or asking Mary Magdelene at the garden tomb, "Who is it you are looking for?" The questions weren't asked because God didn't know the answer. God wasn't trying to find out which tree Adam and Eve were hiding behind. Jesus knew who they were looking for in Gethsemane and at the tomb. God asks questions in order to get us to face our situation. Jesus asks questions so we can make discoveries about ourselves and our situation. Notice three things with me:

**Jesus asks the question so we can discover the truth.** He asks the question and discovery comes. "Have you caught any fish?" "Haven't caught a thing. Not one single fish. Nothing." "Have you caught any fish?" he asks us. He's asking, "Have you been successful doing life without me? Are you satisfied with the way your life is going? How is that working out since you went back to your old way of life?" Jesus asks us the question so we can discover the truth about ourselves, our choices, our need, our failure, our lack, our discontent with the way things are. This isn't working out, going it on my own. You've had a chance to re-evaluate during this pandemic. "How's it going?" It's time to discover the truth!

After they admitted they hadn't caught any fish, Jesus tells them from the bank, **"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." John 21:6** They had to have loved that. That's what you want after fishing all night without a bite: a guy on the shoreline telling you how to catch fish. Jesus gives them a command but understand they have to choose whether to obey him or not. "He doesn't even have a pole or a net or a boat, so should we obey

him? Then, of course, he does have fish cooking on the fire so maybe we should listen to him after all.” Once again, maybe he knows something they don’t know. Notice the second thing:

**Jesus gives a command but we must choose to obey.** The disciples could have just waved and said, “Thanks, but really, we got this. We’re professionals.” We do it all the time, don’t we? “Thanks for the instruction Jesus, but really, I got this. I know it doesn’t look like it right now, and my fishing net and my life are both pretty empty, but it’s my life. These are the choices I’m making regardless of what you are telling me to do. Thanks anyway but I know what I’m doing. I know what’s best for me.” Do you? Obedience to Jesus is best for us all!

The disciples didn’t know it, but they were about 7.5 feet away from a miracle. 7.5 feet away from God’s provision, but it would all depend on their obedience to his command. Why 7.5 feet? In 1986 a boat was found near Kibbutz Ginosar in the Galilee that proved to be an ancient boat from the time of Jesus. Called the Jesus Boat, it is approximately 26.5 feet long and 7.5 feet wide. If this was anything like the boat Peter was in, then from one side of the boat to the other was just over 7.5 feet.

They fished with a net, throwing or casting their net which was about ten feet across, with lead sinkers to weight it down over the schools of fish. Perhaps they thought the man on the shore could see a school of fish they couldn’t see. Perhaps they were already suspecting it might be Jesus on the shoreline. The point is, they had to choose to obey his command or not and so do we. What will you do? Look at the result of their obedience.

**Jesus provides when we obey.** What they lacked all night long – fish – was abundantly provided when they obeyed the Lord. They caught so many fish (153 to be exact) they couldn’t haul their net up into the boat and had to row to shore, towing the net and fish behind them. Jesus provides what we need when we obey his command. **Provision always intersects with obedience.** One way or another. When they obeyed...when they did what Jesus told them to do...

**“When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved 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.” John 21:6-7** Peter couldn’t wait for them to row that boat. He jumped in and swam to shore. Something about that old fisherman you have to love isn’t there? All he needed to hear was, “It’s Jesus” and Peter dives in. He was always going after the Lord, walking on the water or swimming in it, he didn’t care. It is the Lord!

**“The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread...Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’” John 21:8-12** Obedience led to more than a net full of fish. Obedience led to breakfast with Jesus!

They say breakfast is the most important meal of the day. I’ve never understood that and breakfast for me is usually a cup of coffee, but I would have to say, breakfast with Jesus, for the disciples and for us, is the most important meal not only of the day but of our lifetime.

Think of it like this: You are busy living your life, fishing, doing it your own way, not exactly acknowledging Jesus in your life, when he asks you the question: “Catching anything? Having any success? Is life going the way it should? Can I make a suggestion?” We need to decide, in answer to his question, what’s it going to be? Because Jesus has breakfast cooked and provision waiting for us, but the choice is up to us. Breakfast with Jesus or go our own way? Obey His command and experience his provision, or go our own way and try to be satisfied with a life of empty nets?

What’s it going to be? He gives us the choice. Remember, you may be 7.5 feet away from a miraculous catch. You may be 7.5 feet away from his provision. 7.5 feet away from breakfast with Jesus. What makes the difference is your obedience.

Someone is on the verge of going back to some old habits, some old choices in your life. You’re about to miss the greatest catch of your life. You are about to miss his miraculous provision if you choose to go your way instead of obeying his command. Don’t miss it! Don’t miss what he’s prepared for you. Don’t miss breakfast with Jesus!

You’ve got a choice to make. He’s asking the question, “Have you caught anything?” The choices you are making, have they led to peace, to God’s provision, to His blessing? Try obeying Jesus. Throw your net on the right side of the boat. Obey his command and see what happens in your life. But the choice is up to you.

He has breakfast ready and He’s waiting for you. What’s it going to be?

Thanks for joining us online. “The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”