

Mark 16:9-20

John 21:1-14 The failure of us that leads to the success of God

¹ After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*: ² Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." ⁶ And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. ⁹ Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come *and* eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"--knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴ This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Have you ever been in a spot where it seemed like everything you touched went south, when every plan you made came to a fruitless end, when every attempt to accomplish something ended in failure? In fact, do you remember a time when you could not accomplish even the things you are **normally very good at**? This would be a time in your life when you just cry out in frustration and you don't even know what to say.

Have you ever considered that the situation you faced was custom designed by the maker of your soul to bring you to the very heart condition God needed you to have before He could take you any further? In other words, your failures were carefully planned and orchestrated by God. Your frustration was by design. You had to reach that point for God to get the attention He required.

Can you remember a time like that in your life? A time when you finally said, God, I give up. I give up doing it my way. I give up depending upon my own resources. I give up trusting in me instead of trusting in you? I give up following my heart. Do you remember a time like that in your life? Now remember this. What happened after you reached that point with God? What did **God do next**? Now that God had you where He wanted you, did He torture you? Did He make you pay emotionally for the trust that you placed in Him? Or did your life turn around in a major way? Did God not begin, at that point, to provide you with what your soul really needed instead of what your flesh really wanted? Did He not begin to pour out His blessings of those things that are most important in life?

Maybe your life is at one of these points this morning. Maybe your frustration level is off the charts. Maybe you are tired at failing at all the things that are so important to you, the things you think you are very good at. Maybe what God has to say this morning is just for you.

And maybe some of our lives are not as dramatic. But the truth still holds. Maybe we are facing brick walls in our lives and we simply don't know why. But we keep trusting our own resources, our own plans, our own designs. And we have never really surrendered the situation over to the Lordship of Christ. I think we all have something to learn from our story this morning.

¹ After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*:

Remember that we have strayed from our text in Mark to follow up on all the things we are told that Christ did after He rose from the dead. Here we have Christ's third appearance to the disciples. The first was to the 10 without Thomas. The second was to the 11 with Thomas. And now we will find the appearance to the 7.

Now the Sea of Tiberias is also known as the Sea of Galilee, Chinnereth, Chinneroth, and Gennesaret. So there is no problem in the location. But there is one thing interesting to note here. In Matt 28:16 the disciples went to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. Basically Christ told these guys that He was going to meet them at a specific mountain. The words "after these things" doesn't give us a clear time frame, but it is likely the disciples have been waiting at least for several days by now. So somehow they end up wandering down to the sea. They weren't sticking strictly to what Christ had said. That can sometimes be a very big problem.

² Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

OK, we have 7 disciples. These were probably the subset of fishermen in the set of the 12 disciples.

³ **Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.**

What is a leader? I guess we could define it a lot of ways, but mostly a leader is a person that others follow. In that simplest definition, we see that Peter was a leader. Peter made decisions that were consistent with himself and other people wanted to join him in what he was doing. The thing that determines the value of a leader is not so much that other people will follow him. Charles Manson was a leader. Hitler was a leader. The value of a leader comes in where the leader is going. Where will he take those who follow him? In this case, we don't know for sure. But Peter may not have been leading these guys in a very good direction. We get a few clues in this passage and others that may lead us to that conclusion. First, the wording for "the boat" implies that it was a specific boat. Odds are that it was a boat owned by the disciples. And most likely it was Peter's boat.

Second I am going to quote from John MacArthur. . **In John [16:32](#) Jesus had predicted that the disciples would abandon Him: "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home." The word "home" was added by the translators; the Greek text reads simply, "his own," which encompasses one's home, property, possessions, and affairs (cf. [1 Thess. 4:11](#) where the same Greek phrase is translated "your own business"). Christ's prediction thus implies more than that the disciples would return to their own houses.**

So there could be a danger here of Peter and his friends beginning to return to that which they knew, that which they were comfortable with, that which they understood, that which they trusted to provide for them. This may have been the first step in returning to their old lives. They may have been moving in a direction of abandoning their calling.

There is also another evidence in our text in verse 15. When Christ says to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" Christ may have been referring to Peter's boat, and nets, and newly caught fish, and his old way of life. Think about it. The context that Peter is in when Christ speaks to him is on a beach very close to his old way of life.

Now this is a little tricky. Does the Bible prohibit a Christian from being in the fishing business? No. That was a very honorable occupation. So being a professional fisherman was allowed by the law of God.

Then what is the problem? The problem is that Christ had called these men to be fishers of men. He had called them 3 years ago, and they had accepted Christ's call and followed Christ. The danger these men are in now is one of **leaving their calling.**

You see, just because something is not forbidden in scripture, that doesn't mean it is allowed for every believer.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

Paul is basically telling us that there are things that scripture technically permits, but if doing that thing violates a higher priority it is off bounds for us. In I Corinthians Paul is talking about love. Something might be legally allowed but if we did that thing it would hurt someone's walk with Christ. So if it violates love, it doesn't matter **if it is allowed for others**. It isn't allowed for us.

For the disciples, the occupation of fishing was allowed for others, but since Christ had called them as His disciples, that occupation is no longer allowable for them. So maybe the problem here was that these men were doing what humans do. They gravitate to where they are comfortable. They gravitate to what they know. They gravitate from being dependent upon God to being dependent upon self. Now these 7 went out to do that which they were good at. They may not have known about crucifixions and resurrections, but they knew about fishing. They went fishing and they expected to come home with some fish. But what happened?

and that night they caught nothing.

Think about this. How could this happen? Did angels herd the fish away from the boat? Did God direct the fish away from the boat? However it happened, we have got to understand this. Our failures can be as orchestrated by God as much our successes. And both can be intended for the same purpose.

These guys were doing what their flesh was good at. They were doing the same activity that God had blessed for these guys as they grew up. God probably often saw to it that their nets had good catches. But now things have changed. This is no longer going to be God's will for these guys. So God reacts differently than He used to. Now their best efforts are completely futile.

Now, why were these guys fishing?

Were their supplies coming up short? Were they wondering how they were going to meet their needs going forward. After all, the cash kitty no longer had the ministry of Jesus for the source of contributions. Maybe these guys could see they would soon be out of cash.

Maybe Peter was bored. He does not seem like the kind of person who can sit around for long.

Maybe this was a life shift, a very intentional move to go back to the fishing business. We don't know. All we know is that which these guys were good at they were now frustrated with.

Are you in a spot like this? Nothing is working out right. Nothing you do works out right? You are at a brick wall and frustrated because you don't know where to go? Let's see what happens here.

⁴ **But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.**

Night time was the time when fishermen caught fish. Now it is morning. All the fish would vacate the shallows because they were too easy to see in the light of day. No fisherman would fish close to shore at this time of day. So they are finishing up their business.

Now they see someone on the shore, probably at first light. They have no clue yet that it is Jesus. This is clearly one of those times when Christ keeps his identity hidden. At first it may have been too dark to make him out. But soon they will be close to Him and they still cannot recognize Him.

⁵ **Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No."**

I love how Christ addresses them here. The disciples would have understood this as "Children, you don't have any fish, do you?" How pointed? How loving? How gentle? Yet how true?

You might imagine another transaction in our vernacular here. Christ says from the shore, "You guys fishing?" You might here back "Yeah". Then Christ might say, "How's that working out for you?" That is the kind of interaction we are seeing. Christ is drawing attention to the fact that the disciple's hard work is having a very futile result.

Oh that we would ask the equivalent question in our lives. That we would look at the way we are going about our lives and ask the question- "How is that working out for you?" Does our decision making process lead to victory over sin? Does it lead to joy? Does it lead to greater ministry? Does it lead to progress in our spiritual lives?

Or does it lead to frustration? Does it lead to further failure? Do we find ourselves failing at the same points we failed at last week and last month and last year? How is that working out for us? How is our comfortable way of living, our familiar way of living, our way of living where we can trust ourselves to provide for ourselves, how is that working out for us?

You know, sometimes any change is better than the status quo. But if our way is not leading to greater Godliness, it is time to do something different. It is time to face the facts and call out to God. If we are sincere and willing to do what He says, He will provide a way for His children to go. He will answer our prayers when what we are praying for is to **know Him** and to **obey Him** and to **glorify Him**.

Notice that even in their failure, Christ called out to them as Children, as lads. It is a term of endearment. One might turn on Christ at this point and say, so it is your fault we are catching no fish? That isn't very loving. But these guys don't do this. Christ calls to them as lads. And they respond with truth. That is what God wants us to do.

⁶ And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

We cannot miss this point. We can't let our hearts not grasp this truth. What was **the same** in both the efforts producing failure and the efforts that produced success?

Effort. These were the same guys doing the same thing. They threw the net this time the same way they threw the net the last 100 times. They didn't do anything different. And notice, they didn't let the net lay on the bottom of the boat and say if God wants those fish caught He will cast the net. After all, this is all spiritual isn't it?

No, their efforts were the same.

So what different in both **efforts producing failure and efforts that produced success?**

Trust and obedience to the Lord.

Every fishermen knew you would not catch fish in the shallows at daylight by casting to the different side of the boat than you had just casted. If you caught none on one side of the boat, you would not catch any on the other side of the boat. Especially under these conditions.

But these guys did what they were told. They did what they were told by someone they, for some reason, trusted. And what happened? The impossible happened. The failure of fishing all night with no results, the fear of dealing with the consequences of their failures, the frustration of maybe having to go hungry, maybe all the things they were trying so hard to do and were so worried about, all those things went away in one faithful obedience.

Sometimes all the mountains in our way, the mountains that seem unmovable, the mountains that have broken us down in our efforts to remove them, the mountains of pursuits that we think will make us happy but they just make us worse, sometimes those mountains are just waiting for us to call upon the Lord in trust and obedience. Sometimes God is just waiting to remove the frustration but He won't until we reach the end of ourselves. Maybe He is just waiting for us to cast the net **where and when** He tells us. Maybe He is just waiting for us to be ready to finally give up with every answer and every effort and every strategy and every defense and every trust and to just finally lay our lives at Jesus's feet.

Maybe that is your problem this morning. Maybe it is not nearly as complicated as what you would like to think. Maybe all your failure up to this point was only designed to bring you to the point of abundant success at the feet of Jesus. Surrender your life to the Lordship of Christ this morning. Surrender everything you think and do and desire to His Lordship. Maybe this is the moment that God has been preparing you. Call out to Him as Savior and Lord. Humble yourself and He will lift you up. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.

We have gotten to know Peter in our study. I think maybe we have grown to love him, partly for taking all of the shots that would have landed on us if he were not there to take them for us. Here again are John and Peter. And look at this again. John is quicker to perceive. But Peter is always quicker to act.

What advantage was gained by jumping overboard? Now Peter is going to be chilled with no cloak to warm himself. Thomas probably would have thought, "what is that idiot doing?" But Peter doesn't really care. Nor did he need to think about it. All He knew is that if this is Jesus Peter wants to be with him as quick as possible.

Now it would seem to me that leaving his outer garment in a place that might possibly be dry might be a wiser course of action. But in the end it makes no difference at all. I like how it is stated. He plunged into the sea. That is just Peter. A plunger. Some might slide into the water. Not Peter. He plunges.

⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.

The fish these guys caught were probably Musht. They are similar to a Tilapia and feed on plankton. They probably weighed between 1 and 2 lbs each.

A cubit is about a foot and $\frac{1}{2}$ so these guys were about 300 feet from shore when they caught these fish. While swimming 300 feet was probably easy, rowing and pulling 300 lbs of fish was probably hard.

⁹ Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

Look how typical this is. Did Jesus need any fish? No. He already had fish. Christ had the grill started and the first course was ready. But He is still going to use the disciple's contribution to this meal. Now, a fire of coals takes a while to create. And they are perfect to cook on. When we go camping we usually have this kind of fire about the time we are cleaning up from supper. Was Christ preparing for this cookout for a while? Maybe. Or maybe it is something He just decided to make happen. We don't know. But first off He is going to see to it that the

disciple's physical needs are met. These guys had to be tired and cold and probably dirty. But they were going to have a chance to eat very soon. So Jesus says to bring some of the fresh fish.

¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.

I think this might settle in our minds that we may not have wanted to pick on Peter. It looks like he is hauling from 150 to 300 pounds of fish single handed to the shore. This is no sissy.

Notice the detail here. This is not a detail that would be included in fiction. These guys probably counted the fish, either to distribute them evenly among themselves or to brag to anyone they were ever to tell the story to. This was a huge catch. They hit the lottery on fishing this day. This would have been a nice cash crop. They may have eaten 16 of these fish if everyone at 2. That would leave at least 137 to sell or dry to eat later. That is a good catch.

And evidently it was very notable that the nets didn't rip. These nets were not designed for such a large catch. They may have been designed for just a few fish at a time.

So this venture that was having no success prior to Christ's intervention suddenly becomes one of the best catches of these guys' lifetime. And what problem do **we have** that is **too big to trust Christ with?**

¹² Jesus said to them, "Come *and* eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"--knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴ This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

Again, it looks like Christ is not revealing to these guys who He is. But they have learned by now that it must be Christ. So they don't even ask. I mean after all how foolish would it look if they asked if this was Christ. Who else could do what He just did? They no longer needed to ask.

So they come and eat breakfast after the fishing work was over. Jesus then serves the breakfast to them.

We are left with a very obvious application point this morning. Who will we trust to provide for us? Who will we trust to guide our lives? Who will we trust for what we need?

Again, look at the good thinking these disciples were doing. They must have thought, we are going to have some needs. We are going to have to meet those needs. What is the best way to do that? Well, we know how to fish. Let's fish to meet our needs. Doesn't that look like good thinking?

But they were completely wrong. And God was not going to let them succeed in this misdirection, much like God will not allow us to succeed in our plans that are contrary to His. Now, in our failure we will often think that we have not tried hard enough. Or we have just been unlucky. Or we need to just adapt our approach a little. But sometimes what we need to do is give up. We need to come to the feet of Jesus submitting our lives to His control. And then, by faith we do the next thing that we are convinced that He wants. Often that will be to apply for jobs and go to work. It will be getting married and having kids. It may be the most common of things. But it must be done in submission to His will, His word and His Lordship. The point is that these are not our lives.

Paul was making an argument against living in sexual immorality. But His punchline fits what we are talking about this morning.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Paul's punchline here is that **you do not belong to you**. You are not free to live like the world around you. You are not free to live according to your passions and impulses. You are **living in** someone else's property. And **you are** someone else's property. Live looking out for the owner's best interest. He paid way more for you than you are worth. In fact, His actions in your regard is the only way you have gained any value at all. You are worth something because you are bought. Now live like it.

I suppose I should have considered that a little more thoroughly before climbing up on my roof on Wednesday. I wasn't very careful with Christ's property. There is no priority higher than glorifying God in your body and in your spirit. What are we living for? Who are we living to please? How is that working out for us? It will be easy to see in our lives. It will bear fruit. Let's look at what bears which kind of fruit.

Galatians 5:19-26

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there

is no law.²⁴ **And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

I think this would be a fitting application for us this week. Let's look at our lives and look at these lists. Then determine which list our lives are bearing the fruit of. Are we seeing more evident works of the flesh? Or are we seeing more abundant fruit of the Spirit? Gal 5:19-26

Are we trusting Christ with our lives? Are we submissive to His Lordship like slaves to a Master? Are we holding all our plans loose in the palm of our hands for Him to change at His will? Are we casting our nets in the direction He is telling us to cast them?