

## Intro - Open to John 21:1-14

We are back in John and will close it out next week. When Craig began this series on Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020, he started with an introduction to the book by jumping all over to explain that John wants believers to be confident and unbelievers to be convinced that Jesus is God and the Messiah sent from the Father for your salvation. The purpose statement of the book says in John 20:31, “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

After this statement it returns to an epilogue which fits to tie up what starts in chapter 1 of the book which starts with a well-known prologue. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” It is a poetic start which convinces us of Jesus’ divinity and his humanity together when no one expected that to be possible. Now as we get to the epilogue, we see Jesus in not just flesh but new flesh. Resurrected, God’s power on display and revealing himself to the apostles, his eleven disciples, and answering some lingering questions.

I have a simple message for you this morning: **You are nothing without Christ. You have no purpose or power without his presence.**

## Pray

### One – Floating in Purpose

Read John 21:1-5

The Epilogue picks up like the screen had faded to black and back in like a movie. The author/narrator sets the scene is at the Sea of Tiberias, which John wrote in chapter six is also called the Sea of Galilee. This shift in names is another reason we know John wrote the book at the end of his life when the Sea had been renamed by Herod after the Roman Emperor Tiberias.

In Chapter 20 we were in Jerusalem at his previous appearances to the disciples and **Matthew 28** helps us know that Jesus had commanded his disciples to leave Jerusalem, head north to Galilee and go to a mountain. Now we can see that they have either not reached the mountain or had come down from the mountain but either way, they were not on the mountain as instructed.

One of the questions that comes up when thinking about this choice to go fishing is whether God smiles or frowns on this activity. Not everything written in Scripture is approved. Just because it is recorded doesn’t mean it should be endorsed. Obviously, Noah’s drunkenness, or David’s adultery and murder come with clear prohibitions. Yet other actions like King Saul’s suicide the scripture doesn’t make clear in the immediate context whether it was right or wrong. As you zoom out it becomes clear. We are not to commit suicide because it is idolatry. We are not God and should not murder, even ourselves.

As we come back to our text and consider whether Peter and his fishing buddies should have been fishing, we must consider a few options. First, they may have ignored Jesus’ command to go to the mountain so they are in the wrong. Second, they have abandoned ministry and returned to their old way of living. Third, they simply were needing some money or fish to eat so they fished in Peter’s fishing boat before they would have returned to the mountain to wait for Jesus. They have to eat after all. Part of me wants to give them the benefit of the doubt. That’s what I want, to not be judged too harshly for taking a fishing trip when I should be about the Lord’s business. But the point of this story included in the gospel here becomes clear when it gets to their interaction with Jesus.

As day breaks, Jesus is standing on the shore and whether it is morning mist, the dim light, or the resurrected Jesus making himself difficult to recognize, they hear a man they do not recognize call out. **Children (think how you call out to a group “Hey Guys”), do you have any fish? The answer is “No”.**

Now what I want us to see before we get to what Jesus does next, is see what John is setting up. The disciples have come at least halfway to their destination on the mountain top in Galilee. They haven’t run the wrong way or anything. They have come out to fish and come up empty.

I am sure you guys are much more successful than me, but I have had a few times when I completely failed at something. My first season of summer frisbee league in Kansas City, my team with 0 and 8 or however many weeks there were, that’s how many we lost. Just pitiful. I vividly remember my captain and another experienced player getting into it every week in disagreements about why we were losing. It was just awful. Now this is a low level of failure compared to bankruptcy or divorce or homelessness or any number of the myriad of ways you can experience failure.

So just consider the scene and what it is being set up. Jesus' disciples, still being called as such, are sitting in Peter's boat in the Sea, seasoned fishermen that many of them are, and they caught nothing. They are floating there without accomplishing anything. Before following Jesus, they floated on that sea with great purpose and success. Yet, when Jesus called them to follow him, to abandon their nets, to become fishers of men, their purpose completely changed.

This is the call of Jesus, to recognize that without him in your boat. Without him giving you purpose and what we will see, the exact directions you need, you will float in life without success or purpose. As Jesus taught in **John 15:5, he is the vine and we are the branches. Apart from Him, we can do nothing.** It is proved right here floating on the Sea of Tiberias.

Yet they are about to see their night of fishing failure turn in an instant to fishing in power, power only found in Jesus.

## **Two – Fishing in Power**

**Read John 21:6-8**

You wonder why they just cast their nets for a man they do not know. Whether they sense the authority in his voice or they think they have nothing left to lose, they cast.

We might think, why the right side of the boat? James Boice, a bible scholar asks the same question “Why the right side? Because that was the side they were directed to by Jesus! If He had said the left side, there would have been fish there. They would have swarmed there from every part of the Lake of Galilee, so anxious would they have been to be caught”

It is not as if Jesus simply gives them better fishing advice, it is that as the creator himself, he commands the fish to exist, to move and to swarm exactly to his command. It is not to say there isn't an observable reason these fish could swarm as they did, but as readers we have to observe that the means are not the point. It is the power of Jesus that shows up in their reversal of fortune and repeating what came to mind to John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

We read from **Luke 5**, that it was on this lake, and in this boat that Jesus performed this miracle before. The differences make clear that they are two events (something John would've been aware of since he expected his

readers to have read the synoptic gospels). The next section reveals the differences. This time the nets hold when they broke before. This time they haul them to shore, the last time they filled two boats with fish. Yet the similarities spark John's memory. Only Jesus could do this. He calls out to Peter **“It is the Lord”**.

Peter, in his rush to action personality, puts on his overcoat and dives in to swim to shore. He could not greet his savior in a loin cloth or light work clothes, he must be fully dressed. The rest follow in the boat, hauling in the catch of a lifetime.

Their fruitless night of fishing has yet again been turned to blessing. This is truly fishing. Confidence that upon the casting of the net, the success is guaranteed. This is what they lacked; they lacked the power that only comes from God.

We are like the disciples in that we are given opportunities to live this life without Christ. As believers we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good but yet we are prone to want to live without him. We could arrogantly say “I have my fire insurance, now let me live my life!” I hope you see the foolishness of that way of thinking. As if God is taking orders from us on which side of the boat to fish. As if God is taking our suggestions for what honors and pleases him.

We must humble ourselves and realize that we are not in a position to be telling God what efforts are worth his blessing and power. Jesus shows his disciples in a loving way that providing for themselves will never be enough and never produce. He is the vine, he is the bread of life, he is the door, he is everything we need and more! It is to Him that we must come for eternal life and for everything else.

It is in this state of humility which makes the fishing with Jesus, the relationship we have with him and the feasting we will have with him every day that spurs us into the next section.

## **Three – Feasting in Presence**

**Read John 21:9-14**

Now imagine the scene. A crackling fire with a small meal of fish and bread laid out. Peter, standing on the shore breathing heavy, in a soaked overcoat, slowly dripping and Jesus tells them to come and eat with him.

Peter, the strong man that he is, is needed to help the others haul the 153 fish to shore in a net which was not torn. (Those are details only an eye witness makes, just saying.)

This invitation to come and have breakfast is such a simple request. We see this invitation to feasts as a theme throughout all of scripture. The garden of Eden being full of fruit from all the trees in the garden, except one. The perfect condition of man is one of food consumption as a good gift from God to be cherished, not abused. As you continue to trace the provision of God which matches the human need to eat, it becomes clear that our dependency on God is something that God created intentionally.

Feasting prompted the Exodus as the original request by Moses to Pharaoh was to leave and have a feast and worship God outside of Egypt. This of course insulted Pharaoh and he hardened his heart all the way through the plagues.

The Israelites were entirely dependent on God in the wilderness, needing both manna and quail which came from heaven. It wasn't to be hoarded but only enjoyed for the one day, so that the next day they were back in need of God.

Feasts were established for Israel to celebrate and continue their dependence on God. Feast of Unleavened Bread (to be holy), Feast of First Fruits (to be dependent), and maybe best captured in the Feast of Passover (God's sacrifice). Every meal we have, we thank God that we have provision, we thank God that his wrath has been poured out on Christ and not on us, we thank God that we can feast with Christ!

The lesson is not that God provides abundance or excess or wealth for those who follow him. The lesson is that we cannot do anything apart from him. **The fool says in his heart that there is no God.** Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 repeat this refrain. The Christian cannot come to Christ and then live without him. This is functional atheism. Do you understand that term? The functional atheist, lives like an atheist regardless of what label they would claim. To claim you are a Christian, but live like an atheist. That would be to float through life as if God has not called you to live for him. It would be to return to foolishness, it would be for **a dog to return to its vomit** Proverbs 26:11.

## Conclusion

This passage shows that an incredible blessing of the Christian life is we can currently and eternally feast with Jesus! We feast with him today in his word, in the provision of the rain, in the fried chicken at a church meal savoring the flavors and joys with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We feast with Christ in those in whom Christ dwells. He is in their love to us and their conversation pointing each other to the joys in Christ.

Jesus provided for his disciples during his ministry. He provided for his disciples after his resurrection. He wanted them confident, at this meal that to provide for themselves will never be enough. That they will be dependent on him all the days of their life. Children, do you have any fish? Christian, do you have anything that the Lord has not provided?

The greatest place to be is in dependence upon God. Don't let money or materials or people replace the provision that comes in feasts and fullness in Christ.

The disciples needed to know, just like we need to know. That **Jesus will always provide for the church. He has promised and fulfilled this promise over and over and over.**

Christian, recognize that without Christ you are nothing. You were created out of the dust; you will return to the dust. You will be provided for today and forever on the gracious provision of God alone.

Non-Christian, to become a Christian you will have to realize that your sin, which is against a holy God, prevents your fellowship with God. You may have moderate success on the sea on life, but you are cut off from the feast that is the body and blood of Christ broken and shed for you.

Repent of your sins, believe on Christ and feast with him forever!