



John 21.1-19

18th April 2010 Easter 3

Background

- Initial resurrection appearances had led to JOY and BEWILDERMENT. The disciples knew something extraordinary had happened but weren't sure just what it meant and what had changed.
- Peter's intense shame at his 3X denial of Jesus
- The origins of most of the disciples in the fishing community beside the Sea of Galilee.

The disciples are now back in the original place where Jesus first called them to follow him.

Fishing in the Dark (v1-5)

Seven of the disciples are back where the story began. Simon Peter, unofficial leader, says "I am going fishing" and the others follow.

Surprising? Jesus has RISEN! Shouldn't they be out preaching, healing, building churches and founding mission societies? Why go fishing?

- To state the obvious, they had to eat and feed their families
- Let's not 'judge' the disciples with hindsight – the resurrection was very new, radical and shocking – they just couldn't get their heads round it straightaway (like us with 9/11 or global warming?)
- Understandably, they went back to a familiar activity which they were competent at.

But they were unsuccessful. Verse 3 tells us they fished all night but caught nothing.

Having failed Jesus in his hour of need, Peter and Co now can't even get this right. Perhaps God's blessing is no longer with them?

QUESTION Do you ever feel like you are 'fishing in the dark'? Do you have times when even familiar activities are a struggle, when it's as if you are banging your head against a wall? When you know the resurrection of Jesus is highly significant, but it doesn't seem to be helping? You're not alone.

Being Led and Fed by Jesus (v6-14)

Fittingly, the turning point in the story comes at DAWN. The imagery of light and darkness is very significant in John's gospel and now, as *the sun rises*, it is *the risen Son* who stands on the shore and calls out to the tired and dispirited disciples.

- He directs them to a large catch of fish (as he had done before, Lk 5)
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- Typically, John is quick in insight and Peter is quick in action – diving straight in when he recognizes Jesus
- Jesus already has the barbecue going and provides bread and fish for breakfast (reminding of feedings of 5000 & 4000) with some of the fish they have caught
- He is recognizable but different

Something needs to change in the disciples and Jesus feeding them is the first step needed.

We, John's readers, remember that Jesus predicted they would catch people instead of fish.

The Call to Serve and Follow (v15-19)

After breakfast, Jesus sets about the business of harnessing the power of the resurrection and enabling this group to become effective in discipleship and mission.

He concentrates on Peter, who is a natural leader and has influence in the group. Also because Peter's denial is hanging over them like a cloud and needs to be reversed/healed/forgiven.

'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

Jesus addresses him by his old name.

'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Peter no longer boasts of his loyalty and bravery. He has been broken and humbled by his denials.

'Feed my lambs.'

The question is repeated and then asked a third time, *'do you love me?'*

Peter is upset by the repetition, which seems to be intended to match the number of denials.

3 denials. 3 questions about his love. 3 commands. Feed my lambs. Take care of my sheep. Feed my sheep.

In Christ, in the power of the resurrection, Peter must discover a new way of leadership – through serving, protecting and feeding others. Ultimately, Jesus predicts, he will have to face crucifixion – which apparently came true about 30 years later.

In Peter's suffering, he too would glorify God and would answer the call to follow Jesus in the deepest sense.

Conclusion



The disciples were confused by Jesus's death and resurrection but he came back to reassure them, to feed them and to lead them. It is the job of those who love the Lord and have been fed and changed by him to feed and love and serve others.

Peter and the first disciples had a special role and not everyone is called to lead and serve in the ways they did. But, in another sense all Christians are leaders, because we are all people of influence.

Think about it. What positions of influence do you have in your family, the community, in society, in the queue at Mercadona or the hospital waiting room?

Whatever influence we have must not be exercised through power and domination but through humble, gentle and nurturing words and actions and through sacrificing our own self-interest and comfort.

We are called to follow in the footsteps of Christ and live in the power of his resurrection.

A final question. Did Peter rise to the challenge?

Listen to these words he wrote about 30 years later, not long before his execution by Nero in Rome:-

*To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who will also share in the glory to be revealed:
be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

(1Peter 5.1-3)

Jesus fed Peter, led him and said 'Follow me.'

Peter stopped fishing in the dark and followed Jesus. So must we. In this way, the power of the resurrection will be harnessed for the salvation of the world.