

## **April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012: "Jesus The Provider" John 21:1-14**

The resurrection story we are looking at this morning is surely the most practical and down to earth of them all. A bunch of disciples returning from a fruitless fishing trip early in the morning. They are tired, disappointed and hungry after a long, fruitless night on the water. It is obvious that the last person they expected to see waiting on the shore to greet them was Jesus. But that's exactly what happened.

The story begins on the previous day. Seven of Jesus' disciples were together in Galilee. We know regarding at least four of them, Peter, John, James and Nathanael, that Galilee was their home. That's where they had lived and worked before Jesus called them to follow Him, and, with the exception of Thomas, they were probably all fishermen.

The reason they were in Galilee together is apparent when you consider the message that Jesus gave the women as they ran from the empty tomb as mentioned in Matthew 28:10 early on that Resurrection Sunday.

***<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."***

Although the disciples had seen Him in Jerusalem in the upper room, they knew that He planned to meet them again in Galilee. So to Galilee they had gone and were now waiting for further instructions. And being back home where his business was it seemed a sensible thing to Peter that they should go out fishing. Not just to pass the time but to create the income that they all needed to survive.

So off they sailed in the hope of getting a good catch that would put money in the bank only to return with an empty boat and disappointed hearts. Not really in the mood to answer too kindly the query of the guy on the shore who calls out the question which was, in the literal Greek:

**"Children, not any fish have you?"**

Or, as we would put it, **"Guys, you haven't caught any fish, have you?"** It's a question that expects a negative response.

Now the guy on the beach is of course Jesus, but they do not recognize Him, which is not surprising seeing they are about 100 yards from shore. That's

about seven times the distance between Rex and me. So their answer is rather terse, as you might expect. **"They answered Him, 'No'."**

They no doubt thought, and hoped, that that would be the end of the conversation. But thankfully it wasn't, for the stranger on the beach then shouted out, **"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."**

Now I have always been a little puzzled about the fact that they did what this guy said, for at that point they didn't realize that it was Jesus. And for a stranger to spot fish they couldn't see, when they were in the boat and he was at the water's edge some 100 yards away, was stretching the bounds of possibility.

So maybe they were just being polite; or it seemed the easiest way of getting rid of him; or being desperate they had this inner urging to try anything. Whatever it was they threw the net in and had the catch of a lifetime. Well actually the second catch of a lifetime. You see this miracle had happened before. Look with me at Luke 5:4-11.

It was very early on in Jesus' ministry and He had been using Peter's boat to speak from as He talked to the crowd. But it is obvious that Jesus wanted to use more than Peter's boat. He wanted to use his life and the lives of those with Him for the purpose of the Gospel. So we read:.....

**<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."**

**<sup>5</sup> Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."**

**<sup>6</sup> When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.**

**<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, <sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.**

***Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." <sup>11</sup> So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.***

I have no doubt whatsoever that this second miraculous catch of fish was an intentional reminder of that day some years before, when Jesus had said to Peter and the rest, "***Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.***"

So it's no real surprise that when he saw the net so full of fish John immediately turned to Peter and said, "It's the Lord". And Peter straight away grabbed his cloak to make himself presentable, jumped into the water and swam to shore to greet His Saviour. They remembered.

And Jesus of course, remembered too. Remembered the day when He commissioned them to follow Him on a journey that led first to his cross, and now to His resurrection. But He could also see ahead to the new task they would now undertake for Him. A task that would require the power of the Holy Spirit and the unity of believers from all nations working together as one body. The task of spreading the Good News of the Gospel throughout the world.

And with that commission in mind He first of all enabled His disciples to miraculously catch a huge amount of fish without even breaking their nets, and also cooked them a breakfast of fish and bread. And with those two acts Jesus gave those disciples and us a most wonderful promise for the future.

He promised to provide all that we will ever need in our service for Him. This is the risen Lord revealing Himself as His servants Provider.

The huge catch of fish that was so unexpected is, I believe, a sign of His promise to never leave us without the resources we need to live and minister for Him. The cash value of that 'much bigger than normal' catch would have surely set up that group financially for sometime, but it was much more than that for them. It was a tangible sign that Jesus had the power to look after their critical needs.

There is no doubt that Jesus still asks a lot from His followers for the sake of those who have yet to be rescued from hell and eternal damnation—and He has an enormous right to do so. Yet at times we allow the cost and sacrifice to hold us back from an obedient response. He calls us to give sacrificially, to go in faith when we know the cost of going will be high, and to trust Him beyond our means, and too often we, who have so much compared to others, give so little of what we have and who we are.

But when we are prepared to give whatever He asks of us—and those who have sacrificed to go on an Impact Africa or Cambodian mission can testify to this—He amazingly supplies our every need.

When Don Byrne shared his live story with the men's fellowship recently he told us several stories about God's provision for him and Valda as missionaries. And the one I most remember was when he as a young Bible student had to go somewhere special and his suit coat was so threadbare that he knew he would have to go in a shabby old jacket instead. And yet as he prepared to leave someone came to him with a brand new suit that God had told them to give to Don.

I see Jesus here confirming that he will supply our needs if we seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. That's all part of living for Him.

Then as well as enabling them to catch all those fish, Jesus prepared for them a time to rest and eat the bread and fish He had cooked especially for them.

Jesus had been resurrected from the dead but He was still the servant King. What a pleasant surprise to see the coal fire burning fiercely and smell the aroma of cooking fish. To sit around it with one another and to talk with Jesus. To have their bodies and their souls refreshed.

Again we see here Jesus promising to provide the rest and food we need for our souls. He is conscious of you when ministry in His name has worn you down to a frazzle. He is aware when you are spiritually low and need the benefit of time spent in His presence. When you stand particularly in need of the spiritual food that he delights to prepare for you.

It may be through an unexpected holiday that comes your way. Or a chance to attend a conference or a spiritual retreat. Or perhaps the sight of a beautiful sunrise or sunset that renews your spirit when you need it most. A phone call or a visit from another Christian. And even spent alone with Jesus around His Word.

He still provides the fire and the food when we need it most. Let's make sure that we are not too busy to rush by the opportunity He gives without seeing it. Making a mental note that we will not be like Martha who was stressed and busy about many things, but we will be like Mary who chose the better part. That we too will make the time as those disciples did to sit, to rest, and to be fed by our Provider—our Lord Jesus Christ.

