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A Sea-side Breakfast  
John 21:1-14

May 7 & 14, 2017

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<sup>A</sup> Mark 16:7; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4

<sup>B</sup> Luke 22:32

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<sup>C</sup> Ephesians 4:8

A. Introduction

1. Nature of this chapter

a. John 1:1-18 has the nature of a prologue

- (A) introduces Jesus
- (B) not from genealogical perspective as Matthew & Luke
- (C) not from point of view of beginning of His ministry as Mark
- (D) but as the incarnation – God in the flesh – Emmanuel

b. John 21 the nature of an epilogue

- (A) the main purpose of the book satisfied by John 20:30-31
- (B) to disclose some incidental truths; to tie up some loose ends by answering some questions that were floating around
- (C) those of today's passage being:
  - (1) our total dependence on the risen Lord Jesus
  - (2) Jesus' continuing care for His disciples

2. The Six Jerusalem Appearances

a. to individuals or small groups

- (A) to Mary Magdalene
- (B) to the women
- (C) to the Emmaus disciples
- (D) to Peter

b. to body of disciples

- (A) to the ten the first Sunday
- (B) to the eleven the next Sunday (end of feast of unleavened Bread)

3. Instruction to the Disciples

a. to go to Galilee to meet Jesus by the angel to the women (Mark 16:7)

b. later, to wait for the promise in Jerusalem – i.e., the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, Luke 24:49)

1 After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way. 2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. 3 Simon Peter \*said to them, "I am going fishing." They \*said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out, and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

### 1. The Scene

#### a. seven of the eleven present – "a quorum"

(A) in response to command that came via the women

(B) the foremost disciples – Peter, James, John

(C) along with others, including the two unnamed – John gives detail in numbers, as with the number of water-pots at the marriage in Cana, later here of the exact number of fish

#### b. the disciples go fishing

(A) it was at Peter's suggestion

(1) Peter is the impatient one; the first to act (John the more contemplative and discerning)

(2) various surmises

(a) Peter may have felt his denial left no further use for him as an apostle, so he would return to fishing – but he had the promise of Jesus, "but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:32)

(b) that he now needed to earn an income for food and board; but the indications are that Peter's business had been carried on – he had a boat available from it

(c) or, most likely, it was just restlessness caused by waiting

(B) and the suggestion was taken up by the others

#### c. they knew how to fish

(A) three of them, at least, were professional fishermen

(B) the time for fishing on the sea of Tiberias – Tiberias was the capital of Galilee, so that is an alternate name of sea of Galilee – then as now, as at night: from sundown to sunrise

(C) then as now they would use flares to attract the fish, then catch them by casting out the net and then drawing it back in

(D) they had all the proper equipment: boat, nets

## 2. Failure!

- a. they laboured through the night and caught nothing
  - (A) an unusual experience
  - (B) but it was part of Jesus' plan for them
  - (C) for this story, in a beautiful & simple way, teaches us much about being fishermen, not of fish, but of men
- b. "it was the Lord's intention that they catch nothing on this occasion."
  - (A) Failure is a very demoralizing thing. Some of you have tried hard to accomplish something. Like these fishermen, you have expended much energy and utilized all your resources but gained nothing in return. But although failure is a painful experience, valuable lessons can be gained through it.
  - (B) Here is what one writer said about this failed night of fishing: "The night of failure was not without its lessons and its benefits. We can do worse than fail. We can succeed and be proud of our success. We can succeed and burn incense to the net. We can succeed and forget the Hand whose it is to give or to withhold..." <sup>-{2}</sup>.
  - (C) it is not only secular, but also spiritual, success that can carry with it many dangers: so to be a witness to Christ – a fisher of men – requires not simply training, knowledge of Scripture, an answer for all the objections but a deep dependence upon Christ.
- c. in the midst of failure, it was time for the Lord to appear

## C. The Third Resurrection Appearance

21:4-6

4 But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus therefore \*said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch." They cast therefore, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.

### 1. A Manifestation

- a. you will have noted that in verse 1 it does not merely say that Jesus appeared to them, though that He did
  - (A) but that He manifested Himself or showed Himself to them
  - (B) this emphasises that they did not simply see a vision
  - (C) but rather that Jesus was making Himself known to them, that they see that Jesus now existed in a "sphere beyond this world of time and sense ... showed Himself as He is" <sup>-{3}</sup>.
  - (D) the veiling of His glory is partially rolled back from their eyes

- b. Jesus is simply described as standing on the beach – not when or how He came to be there – as in the closed room, simply that he was there
- c. from a hundred metres away He calls to them
  - (A) He is too far away for them to discern His features, and even so, in this resurrected body they might not have recognised Him – that was the experience of others such as Mary Magdalene
  - (B) Paidia! – Children! – this form of address can still be used in modern Greece, particularly to a gang of soldiers
    - (1) Brits would use “Say, lads!”; Irish, “Boys!; others, “Fellows!”
    - (2) perhaps, “Hey, Guys!” is today’s equivalent
    - (3) then His question: “You don’t have any food, do you?”
    - (4) the word is more general, but it is obvious that fish are meant and also obvious that the answer expected is “No.”
    - (5) which is the answer the give in one, short word

## 2. A Miracle

- a. As upon a previous occasion when a night’s fishing had produced no results, recorded in Luke 6, comes instruction from the shore
  - (A) “cast out your net on the right side!”
  - (B) though they do not recognise Jesus as the speaker, they obey
  - (C) Jesus’ authority, if not Himself, is recognised; no questions asked
  - (D) and the net is filled so they cannot bring the fish into the boat
- b. Jesus makes the difference
  - (A) with all their experience, training, skill, equipment –
    - (1) not as single fish had they caught
    - (2) at Jesus’ word – more than they could handle
  - (B) some would say this was a natural phenomenon – that Jesus on the shore could see the shoal of fish on that side of the boat
  - (C) from a 100 metres while it was just turning light? Oh yes, sure!
  - (D) there is no doubt that this was a miraculous catch of fishes

7 That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved \*said to Peter, "It is the Lord." And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

#### 1. John Sees, Peter Dives!

- a. Peter, James & John saw that previous, similar miracle
  - (A) but it is John who recognises that far-off figure to be the Lord
  - (B) and says so to Peter: "It is the Lord"
- b. that is all that Peter needed to hear
  - (A) let the fish wait; others could take care of them
  - (B) He must go to Jesus; right away; without delay
  - (C) in Jewish thinking, the greeting of another is a religious act; the word, "Shalom," is the calling of a blessing upon another person
    - (1) and you don't do religious service in a t-shirt and shorts
    - (2) so he gathers up his outer cloak
    - (3) and girding it up so that he is free to swim
    - (4) plunges into the sea for the 100-metre free-style

#### 2. The Rest Follow

- a. the boat is called the little boat this time
  - (A) so that some have been led to suppose there were two boats
    - (1) a large one and a smaller that could come closer to shore
    - (2) like having a sail-boat and a dinghy to get to its moorings
  - (B) but the two are more or less interchangeable
  - (C) and the huge catch of fish made the boat all of a sudden seem quite small in comparison
- b. nevertheless, the disciples in the boat instead of keeping on hauling in an attempt to get the fish on board, merely dragged it through the water after them and came to land with the net still tied to the boat

#### E. The Fellowship Breakfast

21:9-14

#### 1. Preparation of the Meal (9-11)

9 And so when they got out upon the land, they \*saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread.

10 Jesus \*said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

- a. the word fish, though singular in form, can mean – just as in English – more than one; so the change between singular & plural is not particularly significant
  - (A) nor does the term "bread" limit it to a certain quantity
  - (B) there would be enough for all
  - (C) but there was a purpose in the fish that they caught
    - (1) not to provide some mystic, symbolic number
    - (2) but to bring the disciples' share – and that provided by God – to this breakfast; so that they have the opportunity to participate – have fellowship – in this meal
  - (D) although they couldn't haul the fish into the boat for their very weight, yet Peter hauls them upon the land – there is no mention of anyone helping Peter, so there may be some basis behind Lloyd C. Douglas' title of "The Big Fisherman" in his book of fiction!

b. (Stedman)

- (A) Several things here have parallels in the work of fishing for men. Notice that Jesus supplied the original fish and bread for this breakfast. When the disciples landed, the charcoal fire was already lit, and fish and bread were lying there. This is indicative that all that we have come from the hand of God. We did not provide this world or the food that is in it. We do not provide the opportunities that come our way. Many of them come to us right out of the blue. Behind all of this the hand of God has already been at work. He has already put us in the right place, leading us into situations we could never have designed ourselves. We operate by his grace and according to his efforts.
- (B) "But notice that Jesus then invites the disciples to bring the fish they have caught. This beautifully suggests the way God works with man." What "a privilege given us by God of being co-labourers with him. Human labour was involved in almost all of the miracles of Jesus. For example, our Lord multiplied the bread and fish which the boy had to feed the multitude ... The wonder of this is that God, who could easily do it all himself, nevertheless gave them the great privilege of being co-workers with him.

2. A Time of Wonderment (12-14)

12 Jesus \*said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus \*came and \*took the bread, and \*gave them, and the fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

a. Then Jesus gives His invitation

- (A) like the king who prepared a wedding feast for his son (Matt. 22), Jesus can now say, as it were, “Come, for all things are ready.”
  - (1) they had set out in their own strength to provide food
  - (2) Jesus, though, has foreseen all and foreordained all things
- (B) so it is with our salvation – Jesus paid it all – and with our service to our Lord – he “gave gifts unto men” (Ephesians 4:8)
- b. They are filled with wonder
  - (A) they know that this is the Jesus they have followed 3½ years
  - (B) but in some way, that leaves them wondering in themselves, there is some difference – a difference that fills them with awe
  - (C) an awe that keeps them from asking (even Thomas, who weeks before had no difficulty in asking Jesus questions or even laying down terms before he would believe)
  - (D) so they stay silent, just beholding, perhaps not even yet eating
  - (E) there should always be such awe when we meet Jesus!
- c. then the graciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is made evident
  - (A) the One who gird Himself with a towel to wash feet
  - (B) who has been the cook on this occasion
  - (C) now becomes the waiter, takes the bread and the fish and gives it to the disciples
  - (D) what condescension of this the Son of God for us!

## F. Conclusion

### 1. (Stedman)

- a. “What he invites you to do may be a very simple thing. You may have opportunity to invite your neighbours in for a cup of coffee and share your faith with them. While that may seem an insignificant thing now, when history has come to an end and we are all gathered on the shore with Jesus this may well become the greatest thing you have ever done. We will see ourselves as tremendously privileged to have worked with God in what he was doing in this world.
- b. “The media may give the impression that the important things are happening in ... the world capitals, but that is not so. (The happenings in Toronto, Ottawa & Washington these days are not very impressive.) The spreading of the word of truth, the opening of people’s eyes to the realities of life, the understanding of our humanity, labouring with God to put aside the destructive, dehumanizing forces of earth – that is the work that is important and exciting in this day. We are privileged to be invited to partake with him in that task.”

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- Bruce – The Gospel & Epistles of John, by F. F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; 1983
- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com).
- NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament  
The Gospel according to John, by Leon Morris
- NTC – New Testament Commentary, by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
- RWP – Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament, by Dr. A. T. Robertson

2. This, along with other uncited quotations and ideas in this message, has been adapted from “Breakfast by the Sea,”, a sermon by Revd Ray Stedman, Kerux Sermon # 5444.
3. NICNT, *in loc*.