

Series: The Difference

April 24, 2016

Title: Gone Fishin'

[Slide 1]

Text: John 21:1-14

Gone Fishin'

Jesus' Prayer:

Jesus' Prayer – The Lord's Prayer – makes one great assumption: if we are going to see God's Kingdom come into our world, the King must come with it. No King, no kingdom.

Think about the three requests in the second half of the prayer:

- Give us this day our daily bread.
- Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
- Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Each of those requests is based upon the assumption that *God is here in our world* to meet the need.

- Just as God was present with Israel in the Sinai Desert to provide their daily bread, God is present in our life journey to meet our needs.
- Just as God was present in the Tent Sanctuary in the desert to provide forgiveness for the sins of His people, God is present to forgive our sins and to empower us to wipe out evil in our world.
- Just as God led Israel through the desert, His Holy Spirit is here in us to guide us on our journey.

When the King is present, the kingdom comes. No King, no kingdom.

In Between Space (1):

The last time we meet Jesus' disciples in John's Gospel, they find themselves in an "in between space": like people waking up to a brand new day, they have the dark night of the Cross behind them and the bright light of Jesus' resurrection all around them; but they haven't the foggiest idea of what to do next. They're in between the old and the new.

So what do you do when you're in that in between space? Maybe you go back to something familiar until you figure out what's next. At least that's what the disciples do:

[Slide 2]

John 21:1-3 NIV

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberius. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.

[Slide 3]

"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you."

So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Sea of Tiberius:

On one level this is a story about a bunch of guys trying to put some bread on the table for their families. And like a lot of fishing stories, this one ends with empty nets. But look more closely and you see that John is picturing for us what it's like to be God's People working to bring His Kingdom into this world.

The disciples are no longer in Jerusalem. They have gone north to Galilee – Galilee of the Gentiles, as it was often called. Furthermore, John tells us that they went fishing on the Sea of *Tiberius*. Normally referred to as the Sea, or Lake, of Galilee, John uses its Roman name – reminding us that the lake belonged to the emperor Tiberius.

Going out on the Sea of Tiberius is a picture of the disciples going out into the vast, uncharted and unfamiliar Roman world. Hadn't Jesus told them that they would one day "fish for people"? Well, this fishing expedition points to that assignment.

And on this day, at least, the fishing has not been good. The disciples have yet to make any sort of impact on their world.

"It is the Lord!"

The Right Side of the Boat:

Then, in the early morning mist, someone appears on the shore of the lake, offering advice:

[Slide 4]

John 21:4-6 NIV

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

[Slide 5]

"No," they answered.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

"It is the Lord!"

One of the disciples immediately recognizes the identity of the stranger on the beach:

[Slide 6]

John 21:7a NIV

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

Peter responds with characteristic enthusiasm:

John 21:7b NIV

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

All of a sudden, the man on the shore is infinitely more important than a boatload of fish. The King is present.

Fishers of Men:

Jesus has come to stand on the shore of Tiberius' lake. This is the same Jesus who walked on its waters and calmed its waves. Now He stands as King not only of the lake, but as King and Lord of the entire world.

If the Sea of Tiberius symbolizes the Roman Empire, then Jesus standing on its shore represents the greater Lord who rules heaven and earth.

Only this King can command the lake's fish to assemble on the right side of the disciples' boat. Only this King can win the hearts and souls of the emperor's subjects when the disciples go out and proclaim the Good News.

John tells us that the disciples had to tow the net full of fish to shore:

[Slide 7]

John 21:8 NIV

The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

The net too full to be pulled into the boat is a picture not only of the thousands of converts to Jesus on the Day of Pentecost, but of the millions to follow them, right up to the present. They would never fit into a boat or church of the disciples' making. They could only be brought to the King.

Table in the Wilderness

Table in the Wilderness:

Jesus told us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." And now He does just that:

[Slide 8]

John 21:9 NIV

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus was there with them in their desert wanderings; He brought the food to set a table in the wilderness. Then He told them to add some of their newly-caught fish to the meal:

[Slide 9]

John 21:10-11 NIV

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

Once again, we see what it means for God's Kingdom to come into our world. Peter and the disciples are "fishers of people." They are to bring people to Jesus. The vast number of fish symbolizes the fact that people of every ethnic group will come to Him:

[Slide 10]

Revelation 7:9 NIV

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

John says that the net never breaks: the Church that Jesus establishes holds us all.

Breakfast with Jesus:

Once the food is ready, Jesus invites the disciples to join Him for breakfast:

[Slide 11]

John 21:12-14 NIV

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

This breakfast in Galilee is very much like the one other meal that John describes: the Feeding of the 5000. Both feature bread and fish. Both are served in abundance.

The first meal symbolized Jesus giving His life for the world. Jesus explained that the real Bread of Life was Himself, broken for us all. This second meal is a celebration of *New Life*. It happens in the morning in the presence of the Risen Lord. Even the menu speaks new life: Fish were seen as a symbol of fruitfulness, life and immortality.

Jesus will come in mysterious and unexpected ways. At first we may not recognize that He is with us. But each day He will stand on the shore and beckon us to join Him for our daily bread. And each day we will know – all over again – “It is the Lord!”

The Difference:

At the beginning of the story the disciples fished all night and came up empty. What made the difference? The presence of Jesus. As Jesus told them one time:

[Slide 12]

John 15:5 NIV

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Those words are just as true today. Now it’s our turn to venture out onto the lake and fish for people. We can do our best, use the latest tools, even experience some earthly success. But if Jesus isn’t present, we will come up empty.

It’s only when we have listened to the Voice from the shore that we succeed. And it’s only when we sit with Him for breakfast that we are nourished.

“Apart from me you can do nothing.”