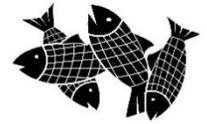


Dear Fishermen of Jesus – Our Risen Savior is Here



Grace and peace to you from our Risen and Living Lord Jesus. Amen.

In the course of my life, I've had the opportunity to spend a few hours on the water fishing. I know what it's like to be pulling them in left and right... and what it's like to get skunked. There's nothing more frustrating than throwing every lure you have - and not even getting a bite. I've even put a fresh wiggly worm on a hook and dropped it right down in front of a crappy's nose... only to have him look me in the eye and move on. It's frustrating and really makes you kind of second guess yourself.

In the Gospel, we heard how Jesus' disciples headed "up – north" to their familiar stomping grounds to do some fishin' on the ol' pond, the Sea of Galilee. Remember, before Jesus called them to be his disciples, fishing was the occupation for some of them. And Jesus had said that they should go to Galilee and he would meet them there, so why not toss the net in and see what we can catch? You heard the account. These pro-fishermen, going out when fishing is best, at night, couldn't even catch one lousy fish. Then, a stranger on the shore asks them if they've caught anything... and gives them the silly instructions to toss their net on the other side of the boat... and the rest is history.

What's so neat about this text, is that it's about so much more than fishing – it's about Jesus, our Risen and Living Savior. He knew where his disciples were at (physically and emotionally). He instructs them what to do, he grants them successes in their labors, and he cares for their needs – proving yet again who he is – their Risen Savior. All of this is also true for us! Jesus knows where we're at... and when we're puzzled, confused, frustrated... he leads us forward, and blesses us, even as he cares for our needs.

I. He knows where we're at... (v. 5)

Jesus knew where his disciples were at, and I don't just mean that he knew they were out fishing. Yes, he had appeared to them Easter Sunday evening and then a week later with Thomas. But that was in Jerusalem; now they are 70 miles north in Galilee. They were out fishing all night long with nothing to show for it. I'm sure as they passed the time, they retold the events of the previous weeks as they repeatedly cast their nets out and hauled them in - again and again - empty, empty, empty.

And then as the day light dawns, they hear a voice call out to them from the shore. His question is very to the point – literally asking, "You guys haven't caught anything, have you?" Jesus knew before he even asked. He knew where they were at – feeling empty, as if their efforts were in vain, feeling that they aren't accomplishing anything.

How many times don't we find ourselves in situations like the disciples? We've given our best efforts at our job during the day – and after 8 hours we turn around and it looks like we've accomplished nothing. Or perhaps it's with the family... all the time, energy, love, care and concern we've put in to teaching, training and parenting our children in the Lord and then sinful foolishness and Satan's shiny trick cause our child to believe the devil's deceitful lie. Maybe you've been so diligent in your diet and exercising faithfully, but then the doctor says that he thinks the scans are showing something.

Friends, if you feel as though you're drifting in a sea of emptiness, of frustrations, of struggles... our Risen and Living Savior knows where you are at and he comes to you. He calls to you – "Friends, how's it going?" Even though he knows, he calls out because he cares for you and he says, "Cast all your cares and anxieties on me." He invites you by saying, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Our Risen and Living Lord has not left us alone, for he himself has promised, "Surely I am with you always, the very end of the age." In these passages you and I recognize not a stranger's voice, but with John we exclaim, "It is the Lord!" The Lord is with me.

II. He tells us what we're to do (v. 6)

Jesus came to his disciples because he loved and cared for them, just as he does for you. In his perfect wisdom he sets out to calm them by given them a simple task: **LISTEN** ⁶ *He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."* Although they didn't recognize him right away, they listened and followed his simple words of instruction without question – for he spoke with authority.

Jesus, our Living and Risen Savior, still speaks to us with love, authority and power through his Word. He calls us to LISTEN and to keep on listening, keep on following, keep on trusting him even and especially when things in our life seem empty and frustrating. And why? because of the promises he has given and because of what he himself has

already accomplished personally for us. Look again and listen how Jesus has conquered Satan and his lies... see the cross where he paid for all sin... go to the empty tomb and know that not even death can separate you from his love. LOOK and LISTEN – and keep on looking and listening to his word, trusting his promises and following his word. And whether your day has been crowned with 153 whoppers or your stringer is only full of the day's ugly sins – you know your Risen and Living Savior is with you, with his forgiveness, mercy, compassion and grace.

III. He gives success to our labors (vv. 6, 11)

The disciples did listen... and *when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish...* ¹¹ *Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.*

John's recording of Jesus' blessings is no accident. Remember, John was one of the first disciples called to follow Jesus. And at time, Jesus did the very same miracle, he granted them a large catch of fish! There could be no doubt, this man on the shore calling to them was no stranger, "It was the Lord" – the Risen and Living Lord. And because it is the Lord, John is careful to note every detail of the Lord's miracles: 1) the fact that they suddenly caught so many fish, 153 to be exact... and they were all keepers, large ones! 2) and the net, with perhaps 4-500 pounds of fish in it, didn't rip or tear or brake. What a let down that would have been had they dragged that net all the way to shore and then have it tear and all the fish escape. Big blessings and little – they were all blessings of the Lord.

How often don't we forget to pause and recount all the many awesome details of the Lord's blessings in our lives each day? That he causes the sun to rise and set... that he holds the entire universe together... that he gives us life and breath, food to eat and cloths to wear... that he commands his angels to always be watching over us and our loved ones. At our men's leadership retreat yesterday, one of the neatest moments was just that: as Pastor Heckendorf asked east table to list off 20 blessings that we God doing here in northern NV... and to try to narrow that down to the top 3... and then to write those on a board.

Too often we're so quick to note the failures and setbacks; so much greater are the blessings of the Lord! And maybe you didn't catch 153 fish today... but you got to spend time with Jesus in your daily Bible reading. And while that friend you've been hoping would come with you to church didn't accept your Easter invitation, you were able to make sure that you and your children came running the empty tomb. Through these supposed "little things" God richly and powerfully blesses and strengthens your faith day by day. How incredibly wonderful are the ways our Lord cares for our needs!

IV. He takes care of our needs (vv. 9, 12)

Truly God takes care of your needs, just as he did for the disciples. ⁹ *When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.* ¹² *Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."* This was yet another demonstration of the Lord's concern for his friends. They've worked the graveyard shift and now they can come right in to fish and bread already baking over the coals. To this feast, Jesus invites them to also bring some of their catch along too.

God pattern of providence hasn't changed. He brings blessings and wonders about each day – and then he also uses us to bring blessings and gifts to others – that we might all join in celebrating the fact Our Savior Lives and Reigns – and that he is always with us.

For these 40 days – from Easter Sunday to his Ascension to the Right hand of the Father – Jesus continued to build up and strengthen his disciples, preparing them for their greater calling – to be fishers of men. Being here today, being in God's house, studying his word, reading our daily devotions – Jesus is doing the very same thing for you – keeping you and I focused on the greater calling he has given to us. Yes there are days we'll cast out the nets and see nothing in return; but then as it so often happens as we listen to his voice and keep on casting – perhaps just on the other side of boat – the Lord brings blessings you and I can't even begin to haul in. Not only did we look back 10 years, Pastor H also challenged us to look ahead 10 years... and to hear people vocalize things like a school, another mission start, midweek service, a combined 800 in worship in a week, Hispanic ministry, lay leader training... I don't know about you, but I'm totally jazzed and ready to go fishing – especially knowing who is with us always – our Risen and Living Lord Jesus. Amen.