

SERMON GUIDE

The Gospel of John

John 21:1-14



11.12.2023

THE BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE RISEN LORD

SCRIPTURE:

John 21:1-14

SERMON NOTES:

Life as a Christian is filled with a range of emotions and experiences. One of the big questions is what is our relationship with Jesus after His resurrection/ascension and His return? We know what it will be one day in Heaven and in the New Jerusalem. We know what it was for the disciples that walked with Him everyday before His death. But what is it now?

We experience times of closeness with God and times where He seems distant. We have answered prayers and unanswered prayers. We lose jobs, change jobs, get promotions, start companies, and shut them down. We have times of plenty and times of scarcity. There are questions we wrestle with: How involved is Jesus? How near is He? How much does He care about whether I do this thing or that thing? Will He rescue me from this trial or make me endure it? There are endless battles of the heart and mind Christians endure in this life. And the question about what is our relationship with the risen Christ until He comes again is a massive question to know the answer to.

Our passage today answers it for us.

Exegesis John 21:1-14

VS 1 -- After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

After Jesus' appearance to the disciples and Thomas, sometime between the 8th day after His resurrection and the 40th day when He ascended, He appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberius. The Sea of Tiberius is the Sea of Galilee, but Tiberius is the name the Romans called it in honor of Tiberius Caesar. He was the stepson of Caesar Augustus. Tiberius Caesar was a contemporary of Jesus and the disciples. He lived and reigned during their lifetimes. But we see that the disciples have left Jerusalem at this point. They had been there since making their way there with Jesus for holy week.

We see in Matthew 28:10, that at some point in His appearances to them, He tells them to head to Galilee and He will come to them.

Matthew 28:10 -- Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

So they are there now.

VS 2-3 -- 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Seven of the disciples are together at this time. The original six disciples who were first called, plus Thomas, are together. Peter speaks up and declares he's going fishing. This isn't an announcement about going to engage in his favorite hobby. This isn't him saying, "I'm going to go shoot some hoops" or "I'm going for a jog." This is Peter saying he's going back to what he knows: fishing. That was his, and many other disciples, trade before Jesus showed up. They were sitting idle. They didn't know what was coming next or what to do. So Peter does the only thing he knows. The others decide to join him.

Application: God's goodness is displayed to us through His lavish grace on sinners.

They went fishing. Now we know they are confused, scared, and don't quite get everything happening. We know that. But Jesus' early interactions with them three years earlier had told them that they were to follow Him and He would make them fishers of men. They were going to spread the good news. They were going to spread the net of the gospel far and wide over the land, and God was going to give them a great catch from every nation, tribe, and tongue. But they're not doing that. They've gone back to fishing for fish.

But look at the grace and mercy of God. His goodness is displayed here in meeting them right where they are, even when they are supposed to be somewhere else. Jesus doesn't stand on the shore chastising them. He doesn't give them a stern lecture as they arrive on the shore. He loves them. He is patient with them. He is like us, therefore, He knows our weaknesses.

Friends, we are not to presume upon the grace and mercy of God. His kindness to us is meant to lead us to faithfulness and obediences. It's meant to lead us to repentance. But some of you run from God the moment you mess up. You don't grasp the character of God. You believe His love and goodness to you is based on your performance. It is not. It is based on His own character. Turn from your waywardness today, not so that God will love and accept you more, but because He already does.

They went fishing, but they caught nothing. This was no accident or display of their lack of skill. The Lord prevented them from succeeding, and we know that because it is going to be the cause for His to once again make Himself known to them in power.

vs 4-6 -- 4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

They fished all night and caught nothing. As dawn is breaking, Jesus is standing on the shore. He's about 325 feet away (home plate to the fence). But the disciples don't know it is Him. How is this? Because there is still something about Jesus in His glorified state that makes Him somewhat indistinguishable for them.

Application: Jesus is near His disciples even when we don't recognize it.

Jesus is standing on the shore while his disciples fished. We don't know how long He had been there, but He knew where they were. He knew they had caught no fish. And He stood there watching them, even when they didn't recognize Him.

This is true for us as well. Jesus is near to us even when we don't recognize it. There are times you may feel incredibly alone. You may feel forgotten or question if God even knows your name. It is a staggering thought to remember that God not only knows you, but is near to you. Our recognizing it or not doesn't change the reality of it.

He calls out to them, asking if they have caught any fish. He knows the answer. The question is for their sake and to bring them to a place to recognize Him. They answer "no." He then tells them to cast the net on the right side of the boat and they'll find success. They did. And the haul was massive.

Application: Obeying Jesus brings many blessings.

The Lord commanded the disciples to throw their net over the boat and into the water for a catch. The net was so full that it was a miracle the net didn't rip. Friends, we do not hold to a health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, claiming that our obedience puts God in our debt to where He has to repay us. But we also don't deny that there are blessings associated with obeying the Lord. The pathway to the blessed life is in step with Him and His Word.

vs 7-8 -- 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. 8 The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

John says to Peter, "It is the Lord!" John recognizes it is Jesus, not because He is physically more recognizable in His appearance, but because this a deja vu moment for him. He remembers this happening before. In Luke 5, when Jesus is first meeting the disciples, they hadn't caught fish all night

and he tells them to go and put out the net. They caught a massive haul of fish. John knows only the Lord could do this and tells Peter.

Peter puts his outer garment back on and jumps into the sea to swim to shore. The other disciples stay in the boat and row back (about 100 yards), dragging the net full of fish. This scene is so funny to me. It captures Peter's personality in many ways as other stories about him do.

Application: True joy in the Lord isn't embarrassed to be counted a fool by others.

Peter jumps straight into the water. He leaps from the boat, stripped of his outer garment, while the other disciples simply ride the boat back to shore. Peter is always doing the most. But there is something you have to love about it, right? Peter recognizes it is the Lord and he's in the water swimming.

It reminds me of David dancing his way back into Jerusalem as the arc of the covenant was recovered and brought back to the Temple. David's wife sees him and scolds him for such undignified actions as a king. David tells her he has only begun to embarrass himself. She hasn't seen anything yet.

This could look like a lot of different things for us today. I believe the way we worship, especially as men, should be far more passionate than we often display. If we recognize Jesus as our King and Lord, knowing He paid the price for our redemption, and has blessed our homes with such kindness, how could our worship look so cold. And I don't just mean at church service, though it certainly applies. I mean in life. We should let our joy and gratitude in Christ lead others to think we're a little extra from time to time. And we should be unashamed of that.

VS 9-13 -- 9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

Jesus has a fire going. There is fish laid out on it, and He has bread. Jesus tells them to grab some of the fish they caught. They are going to have a meal. Jesus has literally provided the catch, has the fire ready, and has bread.

Application: Jesus isn't above meeting our fundamental needs.

This should go without needing to be said, but I've met people over the years who struggle to pray for basic or small things, according to their description. They believe it is beneath asking the God of the universe. They think only the big things should be brought to God. But this is a misunderstanding of the character of God. He made us. He knows our needs. He made us to need food. He made us to

need shelter and protection from the elements. Not only did He make us in this way, but He is committed to being the supplier of those needs.

Jesus feeds them. He isn't only concerned with their spiritual needs. He cares for their physical needs. There's a fire there to warm them and cook the fish. He cares about every aspect of our lives. So go to Him with your needs. Don't be afraid to pray for your daily bread.

Peter, who has to be soaked in wet clothes, goes and hauls the net ashore, full of 153 large fish. So this is a heavy load, but the net doesn't tear. But we learn here that Peter is pretty doggone strong. Jesus then invites them to have breakfast. None of them ask about His identity. It's clear who He is. Jesus then serves them the food.

Application: The Lord empowers fruitfulness from our labors.

Friends, the fish that they caught didn't just jump into their boat. They had to take the nets and throw them. The Lord provided the catch. He commands even the fish of the sea. But notice the means of their catch is through the disciples throwing out the net.

The same is true in our lives. We must work to raise our kids in the knowledge of the Lord. We must use our minds to strategize how to best accomplish tasks. We should sharpen our skills. We must share the gospel with people. We should walk in community with other believers. All these things are actions we take in life, whether related to spiritual growth, teaching a Kindergarten class, building an engine, creating a brand or logo, or any other things. There is a dynamic in which we must act to the best of our ability. But the actions that have the power of God supplied are the ones we need. He makes our labors fruitful. This is great news for us.

VS 14 -- This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

John closes this scene by telling readers this is now the 3rd time Jesus had revealed Himself raised from the dead to His disciples. There was no disputing or doubting for them. Their Lord, who they saw crucified and dead, was truly alive.

This narrative is very straightforward. John's major work is finished in the first 20 chapters. However, this last chapter serves to tie up some important loose ends, particularly the denial of Peter and his restoration (which we'll see next week). But at root we see here another post-resurrection appearing of Jesus. He is truly alive. There is no mistaking their encounters with Jesus as illusions or delusions. He's alive. They've seen him multiple times. We also see this weird limbo the disciples are in. They don't know what to do. They spent every waking second with Jesus before His death, now He's alive, but He's not with them in the same way. He hasn't sent His Spirit yet and only alluded to their mission to come (though they certainly don't understand it yet). All of that is happening here.

The question we began by asking was this: what is the relationship of Jesus' disciples to Him until His return?

This passage teaches us many things. He is patient with us. He instructs us. He empowers us and blesses us. He meets our needs. But John wants it to be clear. The bottom-line answer is: Jesus makes Himself known to His disciples. There is no mistake it is Jesus. He comes to His people.

The same is true today. He reveals Himself to His disciples. He won't play hide-and-seek with you. He will come to you. He will provide all you need, but above all, He will provide Himself.

Revelation 3:20 -- *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

Jesus speaks to the Laodicean Christians in this text. They had erred. They were lukewarm in their allegiance and devotion. He despised their half-hearted devotion. But in the same breath He tells them that He stands there. Waiting. He's at the door. He knocks. He is present and ready to come and dine with you. He desires for you to know life in fellowship with Him.

This text is often used as an invitation for the unbeliever, and in some sense it has uses for that. But it is actually a text for the believer.

Charles Spurgeon said of this, *"He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do it all, or the sinner will perish; but he is here speaking to living men and women, who ought also to be loving men and women, and he says, "I wish to be among you, open the door to me." We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord, we grieve to think we should ever have put thee outside that door at all.""*

That's us, friends. Our relationship with Jesus as we await His coming is to day-by-day keep inviting Him in. He stands at the shore of our lives watching us in all we do. With joy we should rush to Him as Peter did. We should dine with Him daily in the Word and prayer, just as they did the bread and fish. He stands and knocks, beckoning each one of you that belongs to Him to let Him each day. He stands ready.

LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**

- Read John 21:1-14 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
- What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
- Additional Scripture:
 - Luke 5:1-11
 - 1 John 5:13
 - 2 Timothy 1:12
 - Hebrews 10:22
 - Romans 8:28
 - Matthew 6:25-34

- **REFLECT:**

- Why did Peter and the others go fishing?
- Are there times when you've run from God?
- Read Luke 5:1-11 and discuss the similarities between these two stories.
- What blessings have you received from being obedient to God?
- How does Jesus' presence on the shore reassure the disciples?
- Why do you think Peter was so excited to get to Jesus?
- How do we see the faithfulness of Jesus in the invitation for them to have breakfast with Him?

- **RESPOND:**

- In what ways does Jesus make His presence known to you? How do you respond to that?
- What is Jesus asking you to do in obedience in this season of your life?
- What are some needs in your life that you need Jesus to meet now?

- **MEDITATE:**

- John 21:7 - *That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.*

- **MEMORIZE:**

- Revelation 3:20 - *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Executive Pastor - **Matt Espenshade**
 - Ministry - **Students**
 - **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Daizhan in China



- **Population in country:** 14,000
- **Global population:** 14,000
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
- **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- **Primary Religion:** Ethnic Religions
- **Primary Language:** Chinese, Mandarin
- **Summary:** In the old days, when a Daizhan couple decided to marry, the groom would select a date, gather flute players, and dance around the bride's home until nightfall. At dawn he would gather her in his arms and take her into the forest for the wedding. One month after the wedding, the wife would take her new husband to visit her parents. He would apologize to his in-laws for taking their daughter and give grain to his father-in-law as a gift of gratitude.
- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for the Lord's intervention in Daizhan families, drawing people to himself. Pray for the presence of loving workers among the Daizhan. Pray for

the hearts of the people to be drawn to the Lord of lords. Pray for the establishment of a thriving church-planting movement in their communities.

- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>