



The Big Catch

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 26th April 2020

Hi everyone. Blessings to you again and welcome to another service – a church apart from one another, yet together in Christ. This will be our final week under Level 4 restrictions. On Tuesday we enter into Level 3. We still won't be able to meet till the levels drop down. It will still be quite some weeks before we can meet as a group again and even then it will be under a new normal.

This week I want to continue on this enquiry I have embarked on – what were the life-changing decisions or shifts that occurred in the lives of the early disciples that altered the trajectory of their lives, launching them into lifestyles that transformed the then known world.

Today, I want us to look at John chapter 21.

John 21:1 (NKJV)

After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias:

Let's pause for a moment.

This is now the third time Jesus shows himself to the disciples.

We looked at his first appearance last week. Jesus came amongst them and breathed into them and they received the Holy Spirit. They received the breath of God.

We saw the need to come to an awareness that the Holy Spirit – the breath of God – is truly in us. We are breathing the breath of God. Inhaling the breath of God and exhaling the God breath into our everyday lives and environment. I invited us to come to this place where we are so full of God breath that everything we do and say, every single day, is overflowing with God breath. So much so that people around us start experiencing the God breathed atmosphere.

Many times we want to see changes in our lives, in our relationships, in our workplaces, in our body, soul and spirit. We want quick fixes – but first things first. Learn how to breathe. It is all in the atmosphere – inhaling God breath, exhaling God breath. That awareness that everything lives and responds to the atmosphere around us. Let's start being aware that we can truly shift the atmosphere around us by focusing on our moment-by-moment living, totally depending on God. It's just like breathing.

The second time Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, Thomas was present with the rest of the disciples. He showed Thomas his nail pierced hands and his wounded side. We see in John 20:29 (NKJV) **Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

The second life-changing shift that needed to happen in the disciples' lives was to move from making decisions and living their lives based on what they saw to what they believed. Not seeing in order to believe but rather believing in order to see.

Paul put it this way:

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV) **For we walk by faith, not by sight.**

We have looked at faith in a few messages before the Easter weekend. I talked about Faith and Fear in one episode; in another we looked at Abraham and I talked about Active Faith. And finally I took you to the life of Jesus and we looked at Confident Faith.

I encourage you to check out the past episodes about living by faith.

Today we look at the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples, based on John's gospel.

Let's read John 21:1-3 ... **Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself:**

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 are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing" and they went out together into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

Fishing was not a pastime for these men. It wasn't something they did to relieve stress. For Peter, James and John, fishing was their occupation – a family business before Jesus came and called them to follow him. Remember that. "I will make you fishers of men," he said – and they dropped everything to follow Jesus.

Now they are staring at each other, not knowing what to do next. Although Jesus had showed himself to them, they still weren't sure what they were to do. So they go back to do what they know and are trained to do. "I'm going fishing", "I'm going back to work", "I'm going back to the routine of life before I met Jesus."

Let's not forget what these ones have gone through during the last week.

The high of Jesus being received as King with palm leaves waved and the crowd yelling "Enthroned him," "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." That was the Sunday before, and then to hear the crowd yell out, "Crucify him," a few days later.

Friday comes. They all abandon him except for John who will witness the dreadful crucifixion and horrible death of his beloved master. Prior to that, Peter would deny Christ three times.

Then suddenly everything shifts again, with Jesus rising from the dead and appearing twice to them. It has been an eventful and somewhat traumatic week. Don't forget the threat of persecution and arrest is still looming.

And now everything has gone quiet. No sign of Jesus anywhere. They've got so used to having him with them twenty-four seven. Every day, every hour for the past three and half years they have lived their life with Jesus. Now silence and uncertainty – "I'm going fishing", "I'm going back to what I do best".

Let's read on – John 21:3-6 **Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Then Jesus said**

to them, “Children, have you any food?”

They answered Him, “No.”

⁶ And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”

So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

They caught nothing. It might be disappointing but I’m sure they have had bad days in their business life.

We then read: **Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.**

They did not know it was Jesus. Why?

One possibility could be they were too far? Maybe. After all, they were a hundred yards from shore. But let’s not forget that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus couldn’t recognise him even when they were face to face with him. Maybe there are times when we cannot recognise it is the Lord. Whatever the reason may be, we are just told they did not know it was Jesus.

John 21:6 (NKJV)

And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”

So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

These men must have been quite desperate. At least three of them were seasoned fishermen. Listening to a stranger at the shore instructing them to cast the net on the right side of the boat. They do it anyway – and what do you know – a multitude of fish.

John 21:7 (NKJV)

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!”

While everyone was busy with the excitement of pulling in this big catch, John realises it’s Jesus.

How? How did John know it was Jesus?

This is where I want to hone in this week. Everyone didn’t notice Jesus, but John did. How did he know?

I believe he first recognised the miracle. “This is not coincidence, this is a God incident. Something good has just happened here.” I think John had grown accustomed to the miraculous. Throughout the three and a half years with Jesus, when something good happened, Jesus was always in the midst of it. I believe John had learnt to recognise God activity whenever Jesus was around.

In fact in his gospel, John calls the miracles signs. He zooms in on several signs in his Gospel:

- + Changing water into wine at Cana – He calls it "the first of the signs."
- + Healing the nobleman’s son in Capernaum
- + Healing the paralytic at Bethesda
- + Feeding of the 5000
- + Healing the man blind from birth
- + The raising of Lazarus

His summary of the gospel states in John 20:30-31 (NKJV) **“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”**

It seems like in his time with Jesus, John had come to this place where he looked out for signs of God activity. “That’s a God act, Jesus is in our midst.” Six times in John’s gospel he calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was with Jesus all the time. Stayed close to him till the very end. He is known as the “apostle of love” by scholars because of his deep understanding of the love of God.

I believe by spending intimate time with Jesus all those years, John had developed a default mindset that whenever something good, something miraculous, something blessed was happening, he paused to look – it is a sign – that’s God activity – it is the Lord.

He turns to Peter and says, “It is the Lord.”

I want to develop that sixth sense like the apostle John – that ability where all my senses start tingling when something good happens – to pause – to recognise God is working here – to know it is the Lord.

The apostle James cultivated that same mindset. We read in James 1:17 (NKJV) **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**

The Amplified Bible puts it this way, “...no shadow cast by His turning.”

The Message Bible says, “There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle.”

In other words – God is good, only good, always good. This was the active mindset of the early Christians. The source of everything good is from God. God is good, He is only good, He is always good. There’s nothing deceitful in God, God is not two-faced, God is not fickle.

So they had this mindset. In the midst of suffering, in the midst of sorrow and pain, in the midst of turmoil, when things weren’t going as planned, they looked out for good things – actively pursued good happenings in their lives. When they were aware of it, they zoomed in. That’s what John did – “It is the Lord.”

Friends, it’s one thing to know that God is good, but it is another thing to be aware of His goodness. John was aware because he was looking out for God activity. In the midst of all the excitement of a big catch – “Hang on, hang on guys. This is too good to be true – that means this is a God activity. This is a miracle – that means the Lord is in our midst.” “It is the Lord.”

I need to bring this closer to home. In the midst of sickness, pain, fear of the future, depression, relationships that are struggling, financial struggles, job insecurity – whatever the circumstances are – it is so difficult to feel God in these times. All the more we need to look out for the good. Like John, like James – look out for the good. The moment you notice something good has happened, pause. Look closer – that’s a God activity. It is the Lord. Start praising and worshiping him.

Listen to what the psalmist said

Psalms 27:13 (NKJV)

**I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the Lord
In the land of the living.**

The psalmist set his mind to believe that God will turn up. He will show his goodness on this side of heaven.

So he didn't lose heart. He set his sights on looking out for the goodness of the Lord.

Look out for God. He will appear in the most unexpected places even, or may I say especially, at the most common places – your workplace, your home, the supermarket, that nurse in the doctor's office who comforted you and said it was going to be alright, that slight movement in the body that wasn't there before, that few hours when the symptoms weren't present.

Look out for the good – you will find God in the midst – “it is the Lord”.

We are going to finish off with two more verses and come back to this passage next week to look at Peter's response and transformation. For now, let's read verses 7 and 8.

John 21:7-8 (NKJV) **Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.**

Now I don't know if you noticed a slight change in the description of the boat. The story began with John describing the boat as a big boat in verse 3 (NKJV).

They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

He used the word *ploion* – which means ship or big boat.

Then in this verse 8 that we just read, he uses another Greek word - *plouarion* – which means little boat. I don't want to make too much of this but I do think John was trying to make a subtle point here.

Big boat no fish; little boat multitude of fish. Big boat no catch; little boat big catch.

It was the same boat. What was the difference? – They obeyed Jesus. Jesus said throw the net on the right side – they did it and they caught a large catch. Every sign or miracle that John records in his Gospel happened because someone did what Jesus told them to do and they received their miracle. Obedience to the words of Jesus triggered their miracle.

- Changing water into wine at Cana
The servants were told by Mary “Whatever He says to you, do it.” They did exactly what Jesus told them to do – water turned to wine.
- Healing the nobleman's son in Capernaum
John 4:50 (NKJV) **Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.” So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.” His son was healed that very hour.**
- The paralytic at Bethesda
John 5:8 (NKJV) **Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.”**
He rises up, takes his bed and walks.
- Feeding of the 5000
Make the people sit down – he distributes to the disciples and the disciples give it out in obedience to His words – a number close to 10,000 people were fed that day.
- Healing the man blind from birth
(NKJV) **“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”. So he went and washed, and came back seeing.**

- The raising of Lazarus
John 11:39-41 (NKJV) **Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” Then they took away the stone.**

Then Jesus commanded Lazarus to come forth – and Lazarus rose from the dead.

Every single time a miracle occurred in the gospel of John, there was a command from Jesus and an obedient response from the one who needed the miracle.

Big boat or small boat, it doesn't really matter – whatever that boat symbolises for you, resources, strategy, relationships.

“If I had more money I could...”

“If I had more education maybe...”

“If I had more opportunity maybe...”

“If I had a better job...”

“If only I had better staff, maybe ...”

“If I had a better wife or a better doctor, or a better pastor...”

“If I was married...” or “If only I was single again, maybe ...”

“I need a bigger boat.” The reality is – they had a big boat – a big boat with no fish.

It's not the boat, it's obedience to what Jesus is telling you to do that will make the difference.

It begins with an awareness of the presence of the Lord in every circumstance. Look for the good. Develop a mindset that looks for the good in every circumstance. Look out to see the goodness of God in your land of living. When you see something good, know God is in your midst. Acknowledge Him – “It is the Lord” – and listen to Him.

As you breathe God breath, creating an awareness of God surrounding all around you, stop seeing in order to believe but begin to believe in order to see things happen.

Look out for the goodness of God no matter what circumstance you are in. Say to yourself,

“God is good, God is only good. God is always good.”

Look out for God activity – it is God activity – it is the Lord.

Be obedient to his voice, his prompting, his direction – because obedience triggers the miraculous.

We'll pick this story up again next Sunday. Meanwhile, have a blessed week.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you Shalom.