

1-7 May 2022 John 21:1-19

Catching on

Read the passage from John. It is written below.

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 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.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.'

He said to them, 'Cast the net to 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 there were so many fish.

That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you

do not wish to go.’ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

Bible notes

Seeing the empty tomb, Peter and the beloved disciple ‘returned to their homes’ (20.10). Offered peace and forgiveness by the risen Jesus (20.19-23), they again return home to their fishing. Commissioned to share Jesus’ risen life with the world (20.21; 17.18), they are taking time to recognise who he really is. In Jerusalem he showed them his hands and his side. Now he meets them back in Galilee, where they first ‘believed in him’ (2.1-11). Remembering their past, particularly their wounding and being wounded, must become part of their new way of living. The familiar Jesus they previously followed is now a stranger on the shore. By following his instructions, they find life-giving food. He is the source of living water (4.7-15; 7.37-38), as in Ezekiel’s vision of the life-giving river flowing from the Temple: ‘and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there’ (Ezekiel 47.9).

First the beloved disciple and then the others recognise that the crucified Jesus is the stranger inviting them to breakfast. They are afraid to ask, ‘Who are you?’, perhaps fearing the answer, ‘Jesus whom you abandoned and denied.’ But they know who he is, accepting the breakfast he was cooking for them and being allowed to contribute what they had caught. They begin to understand his forgiveness and accept his renewed call, ‘Follow me.’ This charcoal fire recalls the charcoal fire at which Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus (18.18) and, although uncomfortable for Peter, Jesus must ask three times, ‘Do you love me?’, before appointing him to his particular ministry. Peter is still seeking to be first, ridiculously and respectably dressing himself to jump into the sea. So, the first of Jesus’ three questions is, ‘Do you love me more than these [other disciples love me]?’ Becoming wiser, Peter simply answers, ‘You know that I love you.’

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

John Timpson owns the shoe repair chain that bears his name. He and his wife have fostered some 90 children, and his business has recruited 270 former prisoners as employees. In a BBC Radio 4 Lent 2021 talk, Faith in 'Lost Causes', he spoke about the difference between passive optimism – thinking things might get better – and active hope: making them better. Understanding the insecurities that make people behave badly, and having faith in their potential and hope for their future is, he said, transformative. He spoke of trust, support, and love. And Jesus, understanding their fears and failures and offering them hospitality once more, trusts his 'little children', the disciples he loves, with his ministry of supporting his flock.

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week's Bible passage.



Questions

- What patterns can you see in this image?
- What patterns do you see in your life?
- What might 'following a new pattern' look like in your life?

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

Sometimes Lord, something comes along that happens to shake our world.
Thank you that you are with us through the difficulties.
The walls of our lives may be stripped bare,
yet you paper them afresh and give us a new pattern of living.
At times we can be a little slow to catch on to what you are wanting to do in our
lives,
but we thank you that, just as you never gave up on Saul or Peter, you never
give up on us.
Thank you, Lord, for your patience.
Thank you for your caring restoration and renewal.
Thank you for blessing us with new beginnings.
Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Lord, like the disciples,
we don't always recognise you.
Like the disciples,
we need to be transformed by you.
Help us to live and be more like you, Lord Jesus.
Amen.