

# Gone Fishin'

## John 21:1-14

Finally, we've come to the last chapter in our very lengthy study in the Gospel of John. This chapter is a "Wrap Up" chapter. Or you could call it the "Epilogue". Final things that need to be said. The last two verses of chapter 20 were a good ending which says:

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

That's good, but there is more to be said, so that's the purpose of John 21.

We have the Lord's Resurrection Appearance for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time with his disciples. **(SEE v.14)** The purpose is to get them back on track as to what they are to be doing for the rest of their lives. Things won't be the same. Jesus won't be present with them in a physical body. He will be ascending back to the Father in Heaven. It was so exciting for the disciples to see Jesus, but what will become of them? What are they to do? Will they go back to the way things were before they met Jesus? Here's the truth: You really can't go back. After meeting Jesus and having the personal experience of knowing Christ as Lord and Savior, things don't go back like they were. This is what these men will find out.

We've divided this section in three parts:

1. The Disobedient Disciples vv.1-3
2. The Merciful Master vv.4-8
3. The Restored Relationship vv.9-14

### I. The Disobedient Disciples vv.1-3

Notice v.1 **"After this Jesus revealed himself.....** some where between the eighth day after the resurrection of Jesus and the 40<sup>th</sup> day, this event took place. We know from Acts 1:3 Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples before returning to the Heavenly Father. We see seven disciples listed here. The other four---don't know exactly where they might be. Obviously, they were not fishermen like the rest. I'm not sure if Thomas was a fisherman, but after missing the first appearance of Jesus, and then eight days later getting to see the Risen Christ, he does not want to miss anything. So, he's there.

This third appearance of Jesus took place at the *Sea of Tiberias*. We also know this body of water to be *the Sea of Galilee*, or *Lake Genneseret* " It's about 12 miles long and 7 miles wide with mountains on the west, north, and east side.

One of those mountains was where the disciples supposed to wait for Jesus to show up.

Before Jesus was crucified, the Lord gave his disciples instructions as to where they are to go. And where was that? **Mark 14:28** *"But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

*"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to **the mountain** where Jesus had told them to go."*  
— **Matthew 28:16** Notice it's "the" mountain, not just "a" mountain.

**Verse 1 tells us** *"he revealed himself in this way"* v.1c This is the manner in which Jesus appeared to the disciples. First, we have at least seven disciples listed here in v.2. (READ v.2) It reads they **"were together."** They are in Galilee, and that's where they supposed to be. And according to **Matthew 28:16** *"they went to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go."* But something happens. All eleven either didn't make it to the mountain, or they left the mountain. Seven of the disciples are hanging tight with Peter. The other four not sure as to where they were at the time.

You've got Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathaniel (other places Bartholomew), sons of Zebedee (James & John), **two other disciples**. Most commentators think it might be Andrew and Philip since they are usually listed along with these. That leaves four others - Simon, the Zealot, Jude (Thaddeus), James, son of Alphaeus, and Matthew the tax collector.

**Simon Peter says**, "I am going fishing" What he was saying.... I'm going back to my fishing business. He's not talking about taking a leisure day at the lake. He's hanging up all that's happened in the past....and he's getting on with his life by going back to his old job of fishing for a living. He has no patience waiting up in the mountain for Jesus.

He makes the decision to go back to fishing. This was predicted by Jesus. **(SEE John 16:32)**

Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, **each to his own home**, and will leave me alone.

the word **"home"** was added by the translators. It should read *"each to his own"* And the meaning is "business" For example, the same Greek word is in **1Thess. 4:11** "own"

<sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business

Jesus gave the prophecy that they will go back to their own business. That would include their house, their property, their personal affairs, and business. This is what Peter is doing. The other seven followed Peter, and we can believe the remaining four did the same thing as Jesus predicted they would do.

Peter's very influential and you see that with what the other disciples said: WE WILL GO WITH YOU. Something needs to be said here about how you have an influence on other people. Other people are watching your life. They are following your example whether it's good or bad. Romans 14:7 says....

<sup>7</sup> *For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.*

Was there anything wrong with Peter's decision to GO FISHING? Taking a break from a busy week to fish a little is one thing, but Peter is going back to his fishing business. This is NOT what the Lord Jesus told him and the others to do. They were to wait on this one mountain for Jesus to come. Peter was impatient. He had things to do. He had a business to run.

### **Look at v.3c**

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

Everybody has a fishing story, right? What is their story? Somebody back home will ask...the wife will ask, "how many did you catch?" "Hey Pete", says someone who knows him, "did you catch anything?" What's the answer? "NO"

Been out there all night, "nothing".

I do have this fish story. It's about a man named Jim.

Jim got up bright and early one weekend and headed to the local river. He fished all day long but didn't catch a thing. On the way home, he stopped at the fish market.

"I want to buy the three biggest catfish you've got," he said to the owner.

The owner starts to bag up his order when Jim says, "No need for that, just throw them at me."

"Why would I do that?" the owner asked.

"So I can tell my wife that I caught three fish today!"

John, who writes this gospel of John, doesn't twist the story. He tells it just like it happened. They caught NOTHING. ZERO. They were disobedient disciples and being rebellious will only lead to trouble. You'll have empty nets. You'll have an useless adventure out on the open sea with nothing to show for yourself. This is NOT where they were to be.

## **II. The Merciful Master** vv.4-8

### **Notice v.4**

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

**v.5** Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?"

The word "children" might be best "men", or "guys" Hey guys do you have any fish? What's probably meant here is ...do you have any fish for breakfast?

They answered him, "No". Probably all seven of them in unison....said "no". It was common for people on the shore to purchase fish from those who went out all night to catch fish. No doubt, the disciples thought this was some individual wanting to buy fish for breakfast. Jesus had a charcoal fire going....and the smoke was certainly visible to the disciples. I can just hear the disciples talking among themselves.

*"I don't know where he's going to get fish for his breakfast. He's not getting a single fish from us."*

*It is an ACT of Mercy on the Lord's part to be there on the shore. Instead of speaking tenderly to them, he could have been harsh. Jesus could have said something like this:*

"What are you all doing out there in that boat?"

"Where did I tell you to go?" "You disobedient, thick-headed, stubborn disciples"

"Peter, why did you lead all of them to follow you out there? That's not where you should be." What's wrong with you?

**But Peter hears none of that.** He hears a loving voice, a compassionate voice, a tender voice, a forgiving voice,

THE MERCIFUL MASTER who is so patient and kind says this:

**Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."** They did not know this was Jesus. You would have thought the command to *"cast the net on the right side of the boat"* would have given his identity away. This has happened before.

Back a few years before this....Jesus said the same thing to these men.

### **SEE Luke 5:1-11**

Jesus said...from now on... you will be fishers of men.....you will catch men.... you will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and win others to the Lord Jesus. That's your NEW vocation. That's your calling and commission from the Lord.

CAST THE NET ON THE **RIGHT SIDE** OF THE BOAT, AND YOU WILL FIND SOME.

Why right side? Why not the left side? or the Bow of the boat, or Stern of the boat?

Does it matter? YES. the Right Side means you had better get on the "right side". You get on the WRONG SIDE, and you won't catch a thing.

**Notice v.6c** So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish."

**v.7** That disciple whom Jesus loved (this is John) therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" (EXCLAMATION POINT!!!)

The LORD is BEHIND all of this.... Here's the point - these experienced fishermen who knew the LAKE very well, and they knew where the fish could be caught, were unsuccessful. The

same Lord who directed the fish into the net ALSO prevented the fish from getting into the net during the night. It doesn't matter how experienced you might be, how much you think you know, without the Lord you will not be successful. Nothing wrong with fishing for a living, but the Lord changed their vocation. They were now called to be full time ON MISSION with the business of "catching people" for Christ.

Peter had probably thought, "how is preaching, evangelizing, and being the Apostle of Christ going to put fish on the breakfast table?" He's learning again things the Lord had already taught him. What came to mind may have been these words from the Lord Jesus:

<sup>31</sup> Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

<sup>32</sup> (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

<sup>33</sup> But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:31-33)

Immediately Peter took off.... He knew it was the Lord. He grabbed his shirt (outer garment) ...because he was stripped to work.... but now....this work is over.... He took his tunic because he's not coming back. It's time to get to shore. It's time to get serious with the Lord and what God has called him to do.

**He threw himself into the sea.** I believe he done a Swan dive! And swam as fast as he could to get to Jesus. He couldn't get there fast enough! He's got to get to the Master. He knows he's not where he should be. Peter knows it's his fault. It was his decision to go back to the fishing business. Instead of being on the mountain where Jesus told him to be, he went out on the lake. WRONG place. BAD results.

He has been disobedient to the command of Jesus. But the voice of Jesus, and the miraculous catch of fish proved one thing-- **Jesus cares.** He is a wonderful, merciful Savior.

**Notice v.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.

Peter swam the distance, but the others came in the boat dragging the net full of fish.

**How far to land?** 100 yards, or if you want--- the length of a football field. Peter, couldn't you wait until the boat got at least 50 or 25 yards from the shore? No way, Peter was not waiting on a slow boat, and it's his boat..he knew the speed, and with all those fish slowing it down. He did not wait.

You know, neither should we WAIT. Verse 8... **they were not far from the land, about a 100 yards.... the length of a football field...**

**NOT FAR from LAND.... the Merciful Master was pulling them in....**

Never think the Lord is millions of miles away.... He is not far from all who will hear his voice.

**Psalm 34:18** The LORD is near to the brokenhearted

**Romans 10:8-9**

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved

### **III. The Restored Relationship** vv.9-14

**Notice v.9** When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place with fish laid out on it, and bread.

**I believe Peter** got there before the other disciples with the boat that dragged the net of fish. WHEN they all got on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place....with fish laid out on it, and bread.

But there's Peter at the charcoal fire. Wait a minute! This reminds us of another "charcoal fire". Do you remember Peter was standing around a fire warming himself with others. It was cold. Peter was pointed out as being associated with Jesus. Peter denied knowing the Lord Jesus.

NOW, Peter is warming himself again...why is he cold? You swim 100 yards, your clothes are drenched...you are shivering. But it doesn't take long to get warm at this fire. He's not denying the Lord, this time. He's saying....well we don't know what he said before the other disciples got there. John doesn't record it. John was not given that knowledge, and I think I know why. The conversation was between Peter and Jesus.

**Where did Jesus get his fish? and bread?** That's his breakfast. How did he come up with it? Could I give you a hint. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, "let there be light and there was light".

In this case, Jesus said, "*let there be breakfast, and there was breakfast.*" I know it doesn't actually say Jesus created the food on the spot. But it does say this in John 20:30 and there's John 21:25.

I see here the fish Jesus caught, or you might say, created by the power of his word as an illustration. Catching Fish is the illustration in this whole event to help the disciples see that

they are to be in the business of “catching people” for the Kingdom of God. Jesus already had some “fish” cooking. That represents those sinners who it seems no one has spoken a word to them about Jesus. You wonder “how were they caught?” How did they come to know the Lord? God in His sovereignty moves upon the sinner’s heart. The Holy Spirit is like the wind, He moves where he pleases and you can’t tell where it’s coming or going. Out of nowhere someone is CAUGHT on the GOSPEL HOOK, or the NET of the Holy Spirit and they are brought to Jesus. No one seemingly talked to them. You know it was totally a work of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit.

But then there are those who are caught by maybe your own personal efforts of evangelism. Someone prayed for the person. Someone spoke to them of Christ, and now they are part of the redeemed. **LOOK at v.10 “Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.”** It was by the power of the Lord these fish were directed to swim into the nets. But Jesus said, Bring some of the fish that **YOU have just caught. Yes God gets credit. It’s by the grace of God that anyone is saved. But the Lord involves his disciples as a MEANS to get people saved.**

Jesus didn’t say, “bring some of the fish that I caught for you.” He gives them credit for catching the fish.

And when Jesus said that... Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, himself. He must have been a strong man.... he pulled in all 153 of them. Just wait we’ll see the power of the Holy Spirit come on Peter at Pentecost, He’ll be used of the Lord to bring in over 3000. Not fish, but the souls of men, women and children will be caught for the glory of God.

153.... very specific. An odd number. Not rounded off. It Lets us know....every single fish was important. Some people say, “we shouldn’t worry about numbers”. Let’s don’t count how many are present, how many are absent among us. Let’s don’t keep up with who is here and who is not here.

I know we are more than a number on a piece of paper. But behind every number is a soul. Jesus cares so much, he wanted us to know down to the very number, that 153 fish were caught.

He wanted us to know down to the very number 3000 souls were saved on the Day of Pentecost. God loves numbers. He told Abraham to count the stars to determine the number of people who would be in his family. God even has one of the books of the Bible named “Numbers”. The fourth book in the Old Testament.

When you go fishing.....and then come home, someone may ask you. How many did you catch? In case someone ask about this fishing experience with the disciples, the Lord had it recorded for us --- a total of 153.

Another question someone might ask you... How big were the fish? Did you only catch small blue gill, a small bass? How big were they?

The Lord knew someone might have that question so he gives us the answer. The fish the disciples caught were a total of 153, and according to verse 11, **they were LARGE FISH.** We are NOT talking about a few LARGE fish, but the nets were FULL of Large fish.

Every single soul that comes to know the Lord; every child of God caught in the net by the saving work of Christ is a HUGE catch. There are no insignificant, unimportant souls in the kingdom of God. They are LARGE in God's eyes. It's a big deal. I remember a little guy named Phillip surrendered his life to Christ during a VBS. He told the boys outside on the church grounds where a softball game was being played of what happened. The boy said, "hey everyone, I'm now a Christian" and one boy's response was "so". You didn't hear "glad to hear of this. There are no SMALL ones....all who come to Christ...it's a big deal. It's a big catch!

**Notice v.11c** "Although there were so many, the net was not torn"

This is different from the miraculous catch back in Luke 5....the nets were breaking and loading the fish on the two boats caused both vessels to start sinking.

HERE - the net was NOT TORN. It held up to the weight of the fish. A good lesson that might be seen here - When Christ is in charge, He will provide all that we need. He will empower us to catch others for Christ. He will strengthen our nets to be used to teach and reach others with the Gospel of Christ.

**v.12** Come and have breakfast. He invites them to come and take fish and bread.

None of the disciples dared asked him, "Who are you?" They might have wanted to ask, "are you Jesus?" Who are you? Just want to be sure. NO....they knew! They knew it was the LORD.

They had been disobedient. They were not on that mountain. Off doing their own thing out there on the lake. I'm sure they felt so undeserving to come forward and take a fish, and a biscuit. After what they have done.

The Lord had to ACTUALLY take them the fish and bread.

**NOTICE v.13** "Jesus came and took the bread....." Here Jesus is in the role of a servant. He serves them breakfast. Maybe Jesus said, "I hope you like how I cooked it. And the good seasoning I put on it." "I put that favorite TARTER sauce." Well, I'm just using some imagination.

Jesus **gave it to them.** He gave the BREAD.....and then he gave them the FISH. He walks around to each disciple.....

There is sweet fellowship here around the charcoal fire. Having breakfast together.

God is going to use these men to preach His Gospel.

God will use them to preach the Cross of Jesus and the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.

They will preach repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is God's plan. He doesn't have PLAN B. He will use these men who have demonstrated weakness, and disobedience. They are sinners saved by the grace of God. That's all God will use.

It's a glorious thought. The Lord will use us. We have failed. We have strayed away from the place where God told us to be. Yet he desires to have FELLOWSHIP with us.

### **1John 1:6-7**

<sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

<sup>7</sup>But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

In Christ we have restored fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

What about those who have made a big mistake? Is there hope for those who have really blown it?

The answer is YES. And we'll see that with Peter, next time.