

## John 21:1-14 Time to Restart

April 10, 2016

Easter isn't a day but a season. It is a celebration of victory and new life. It is new life for everyone whose old life has crashed in flames. It is also a call to follow the Lord and join Him in the work He has called us to do. Jesus is alive; His tomb is empty. He comes again with the one thing we all need, a restart, a second chance. Our response to such grace gives us an eagerness to be with Him and to work together to serve Him.

In our text today, Jesus comes with His power to recall, reinstate, and recharge His followers for the mission. It's no coincidence that Jesus repeated the miracle He did when He first called them into discipleship. Peter and six of his friends had gone back to fishing, their former livelihood. They thought they were faced with game over, and when your world has collapsed, you go back to the old and familiar. They did not understand that Jesus still had work for them to do. They had simply dropped out of the cause of Christ and had intended to take up life where they had left off. As far as they were concerned, there was nothing else left for them to do. They had all messed up and denied or deserted Jesus. They had failed and were at a loss about what to do now.

We've all done it ... an oops, a mistake, an error, a poor decision, a failure. But the lesson of Easter is that Jesus is the Lord of second chances. Jesus loves those whom He calls so much that even when they blow it big time, when they fail Him badly, when they deny Him flat out, He doesn't deny them, but rather bids them to come again to His merciful arms. Jesus is the Lord of second chances. On that morning in Galilee, Jesus came and called them again, just as He had before. This meeting with them was to renew His relationship with them and to renew their commitment to Him and His mission. So, as He had done the first time, Jesus graciously went looking for them ... again.

When you read the gospels, you begin to see a pattern. Jesus' disciples often proved to be weak at what they did. Caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus asleep in the boat, the disciples were afraid. Faced with a hungry crowd of more than 5,000, the disciples didn't know what to do. Five loaves and two fish would never be enough. - Peter had proven to be a disciple who was weak and afraid. He tried to walk on water, but soon took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. On the night Jesus was arrested, Peter had denied the Lord, not once, not twice, but three times. That same night the other disciples had also run away in fear. Then, after Jesus' death, Peter and the others continued to let fear get the best of them. For each one of them, their relationship with Jesus was in need of repair, a restart.

Our risen Lord is the Lord of second chances. He appeared to the disciples and gave Peter and the rest His peace. Along with the other disciples, Peter received the Spirit and the authority of the risen Lord to remit and retain sins. The Lord of second chances had given them all another chance. But that day, back in Galilee, Peter was still a broken disciple. He still needed help. Peter and the others with him had gone back to doing what they did best, fishing, and they failed. The nets were empty. They've had a terrible night fishing, again. They've caught nothing, again. Peter and the others were trying as best they could to go on with their lives in the world. But their lives without Jesus continued to be empty, just like their nets.

When you think about it, their failure to catch any fish is a picture of what life without Jesus is ultimately like. How many people do you know who are not satisfied with their lives? They don't have the peace and happiness they long for. Something is missing in their life. You see friends and family members going through life without a clue as to what's really important. Maybe they make a lot of money and they think they're happy. They pretend life is satisfying. We know how the story will end up. They have convinced themselves that life without Jesus is just fine. If there is a heaven, they can get there without all the expense. In our own lives we choose jobs, dates and spouses without considering God's will. We chase our toys, our good times, our next raises with real eagerness. All the while we hear God's word and answer God's call with indifference. We delude ourselves into thinking that life without Jesus isn't really that bad.

Peter and his friends had all gone back to fishing. They had dropped out of the cause of Christ and planned to take up where they had left off. Now as dawn broke on the disciples' fishing trip they had come up empty, but the risen Lord in His mercy appeared again to the seven, and especially to Peter. There's some unfinished business the Lord needs to take care of, and so He comes to the disciples again. He is the Lord of restarts, and reboots, and second chances. Again and again He comes to fellowship with his poor disciples. He helps Peter and the rest catch fish ... and more.

You need to compare this story to the first time it happened in Luke 5 because there is an important difference. In Luke 5, the disciples had let down the nets at Jesus' instruction and made a great catch of fish. In that instant, Peter recognized who Jesus was. He responded by saying, "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Now in John 21 as the disciples again let down their nets at Jesus' instruction, there is another great catch of fish. In that same instant, Peter again recognizes who Jesus is and this time, instead of trying to get away from Jesus, he does a Forrest Gump and jumps in the lake to swim to Him. In that instant Peter remembered grace. He remembered forgiveness. He remembered Jesus' call to be a fisher of men. He remembered the words he once said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." He remembered that Jesus is the Lord of second chances. Now, after a terrible night of fishing, Jesus appeared to them again and blessed them again with an abundant catch of fish. Then Jesus restored Peter and the rest to their identity as disciples. As He invited them to come, He was renewing His very first call to them.

What a remarkable breakfast that must have been. The last time they all sat and ate together was at the Last Supper. Jesus had said to them, "One of you will betray me" and they all wondered who it might be. Jesus also spoke these words to them ... this is my body ... this is my blood ... given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Now He comes with breakfast to get them ready for the day ahead, the new life ahead. Jesus does that with the same forgiveness. He gives them a restart that they might follow Him all over again. Peter, I want you anyway, I know your sin. That's why I suffered and died. I did it for you. I forgive you. I still want you to follow me and serve me. I want you to be a fisher of men.

There's a miracle in our text today that you need to see. It's not the great catch of fish. It's not Peter's ability to bounce back. The real miracle is the resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus and the grace and forgiveness He continues to bring even after we mess up. His death and resurrection was all for the purpose of this moment, that He might be the Lord of the second chance. How like Peter we often are. We have been embarrassed, slow or afraid to admit before others that we are disciples of Jesus. When we see our failures we are tempted to say, "Lord, you can't use me. There are others who would do better. Yet our Lord continues to forgive and to restore those whom He has called as disciples. That's what make Him the Lord of second chances. Think about the catch of fish the disciples made that day -153 fish ...a miracle!

There's another miracle that's a little less obvious. They fished all night but didn't catch anything. Did you realize that no fish was a miracle too? You may not think so. I catch no fish all the time. But there was a reason that the disciples didn't catch any fish that night. They came up empty because that was Jesus plan. You see, Jesus didn't want them to go back to their former way of life, so He closed the door on that opportunity. He wasn't about to let them escape back into the world and their fishing failure was His way of protecting them from a bad mistake.

Has that ever happened in your life? The Lord withholds success because He has something else, something better in mind for you. Just as Jesus dried up all the good fishing spots that night, so He closes some of the doors in our lives, so that He might lead us along the other path that He has already chosen for us. When you see God working that way in your life, it underlines just what grace is. Grace is when God gives you what you don't deserve. He gives your life a reboot. Peter had failed so often that he didn't deserve to be an apostle. Paul in our first lesson today had persecuted the church and the Lord. He didn't deserve to be an apostle either. In the same way, you and I don't deserve the privilege of serving our Lord and Saviour. We don't deserve to be forgiven time after time when we stumble and fall but God is gracious. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting our sins against us because He has already counted them against Christ on the cross.

What does the Lord of second chances have for you today? Can broken or failed relationships be restored in your family? Can hard feelings among church members be restored? The Gospel brings with it the life changing and restoring power of God. Paul was changed from persecutor to preacher. He knew where the power came from. It's not me but Christ in me. "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead." Peter knew where this life altering power came from too. He deserved the rejection of Jesus, but instead found friendship, forgiveness and a call to ministry.

One more character in our lessons today is Ananias. The Lord met him in a vision. It started in the middle of a good night's sleep and it ended with a divine appointment to meet the murderous Saul. We prayed this morning that we might have the will to show forth in our lives what we profess with our lips. That was the challenge that Ananias had. God called him to bring the forgiving power of the Gospel and the life changing power of baptism to Saul, to give him a second chance. That is the ministry to which God calls us today. You and I both know what it's like to be blessed with forgiveness, to be given the opportunity for a second chance, a restart, a reboot. The same power that God gave to Ananias, He also gives to us today. Jesus had prepared breakfast for His friends. The menu was the same as the feeding of the 5,000. The real menu then was Jesus himself, the bread of life. The real menu now is the same. He is the bread of life and He brings forgiveness, renewed power, another chance.