

JOHN AND THE BOOK OF SIGNS (10) THE RESURRECTION

John 21:1-14

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April 1, 2018

PREFACE

The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate miraculous sign in the gospels. Our Scripture reading for today contains one of the ten recorded appearances of Jesus after his resurrection. This was the third appearance to his closest disciples and the seventh overall. The time is approximately the second week after Jesus rose from the dead. The location is the north shore of the Sea of Galilee also known as Tiberias. I like to call this appearance “The Resurrection Breakfast.”

SCRIPTURE

¹Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. ²Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples. ³Simon Peter said, “I’m going fishing.” “We’ll come, too,” they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.

⁴At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn’t see who he was. ⁵He called out, “Fellows, have you caught any fish?” “No,” they replied. ⁶Then he said, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!” So they did, and they couldn’t haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.

⁷Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. ⁸The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. ⁹When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.

¹⁰“Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught,” Jesus said. ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn’t torn. ¹²“Now come and have some breakfast!” Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. ¹⁴This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised

from the dead (John 21:1-14 NLT).

INTRODUCTION

Most nutritional experts, including the 70,000 members of the American Dietetic Association, say breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Of course, reminding people from Battle Creek about the importance of breakfast is a bit like the proverbial “preaching to the choir.” What we eat for breakfast makes a big difference in how we experience the day. The only thing that can make a greater difference is *who* we include with our breakfast.

Who do you include in your breakfast? Is Jesus a part of your breakfast? If so then you will notice a positive difference in how you experience the day. You can see a difference in how you understand God, how you relate to God, and how you fulfill God’s purpose for your life. To help us better appreciate these benefits I want us to take a closer look at the Resurrection Breakfast.

1. THE RESURRECTION BREAKFAST MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

What you learn from the resurrection breakfast can make a difference in your understanding of God.

We know from Mark’s Gospel that Jesus had previously told his followers to meet him in Galilee (Mark 16:7). This was a natural place to regroup after the startling events of the previous week. But once the disciples arrived it was not immediately obvious what they were to do. Peter was not one to just stand around. So he decided to do what was most familiar to him. He went fishing. The other disciples, recognizing Peter as their leader, and not having a better idea, went with him – even those who had never been part of the fishing business!

Fishing was done with nets and usually carried out at night close to shore. On this particular night they were unsuccessful. In the early morning light they saw a stranger on shore. The stranger said to them, “Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you’ll get some!” And so they did what the stranger suggested. You may think this was an odd occurrence but it was actually quite common and well documented. Someone on shore could have a vantage point that those on the boat did not have and might see a school of fish in a different location. Remember, they were only about 100 yards from shore. Besides, they had nothing to lose.

They tossed the net and caught a huge shoal of fish. This was incredible! Amazing! Such a thing had happened only one other time in their lives. It was about three years

earlier and, oh yeah, Jesus was with them then. Jesus. Jesus! John figures it out. The stranger is Jesus. He tells Peter and Peter is so excited he jumps into the water to greet Jesus. The others come in with the boat. But they all meet up with Jesus on shore. Jesus is cooking breakfast and invites them to join him.

That's it. No strange religious vision. No flashes of light. No trumpets. No Hallelujah Chorus. Just breakfast on the beach. A real breakfast. A real Jesus.

The passage reads as an eyewitness account. John tells us what he saw and heard. In the process he discloses to us something about God. Flashing lights and heavenly voices are extremely rare. We usually encounter God in the familiar. He reveals himself through the mundane. He is with us in a morning meal with friends and family.

God is known through the ordinary lives and circumstances of real people, people like us. How different our lives would be if we sought him in every place and situation. In every situation there is a way to experience God, including the good times and the bad, wonderful blessings as well as interruptions, and delays.

2. THE RESURRECTION BREAKFAST MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

What you learn from the resurrection breakfast can make a difference in your understanding of God. It can also make a difference in your relationship to God.

I already mentioned that the miraculous catch of fish felt familiar to the disciples because they had experienced it three years earlier. The event is recorded in Luke's Gospel (Luke 5:1-11). But there is a huge difference in how Peter relates to Jesus. The first time Peter experienced the miraculous catch of fish it made him aware of the presence of God's power and holiness and that reminded him that he was a sinful mortal. He was filled with guilt and shame. He cowered before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man" (5:8 NLT).

Three years later things were different. Jesus had laid down his life to remove Peter's guilt and shame. (Just as he had laid down his life to remove our guilt and shame.) Then by the power of God, Jesus was raised from the dead and was made alive. Peter saw him. But this time there was no cowering in shame. Guilt and fear were left behind. In their place was joy. And in joyful enthusiasm he jumped into the water to swim to Jesus.

John gives a couple of important details. He tells us Peter was naked, meaning, he was only wearing the 1st century equivalent of boxers that, moreover, would double as swimming trunks. John also tells us that before Peter jumped into the water he got

dressed! This does not seem to make sense. If you are in a hurry and especially if you are going to take a swim, why put on clothes?

But in the culture of that time, it was considered disrespectful to greet a friend undressed. If it had only been a Roman general or one of the chief priests of the Temple then no problem - you come as you are, dripping boxers or not. But if the person was your friend, really your friend, you got dressed. Peter got dressed.

The contrast is striking. The first time, Peter was filled with fear and wanted to run away in shame. The second time, he was filled with joy and wanted to run to Jesus in friendship. The resurrection was the difference.

Sin and death have been conquered. Guilt, fear and shame can be left behind. And the most amazing thing of all is that the same Lord who created the entire universe and who was embodied in that Person who cooked breakfast for his friends, wants us to be his friends, also.

Today is April 1, 2018. Perhaps you have seen this photograph of a church window sign that has been making the rounds:



Translation: "You only live once. Ha! Ha!. Just kidding. Be right back" – Jesus.

The last time Easter fell on April Fools' Day was in 1956. The next time will be in 2029. But the truth is every Easter is April Fools' Day. The resurrection was a joke on those in power at the time of the crucifixion. They thought once Jesus was dead, he would be out of their way, and things would return to normal. But the Lord came back to say, "Surprise!" The devil was made a fool and God gets the last laugh over sin and death.

The resurrection makes a huge difference in your relationship to God.

3. THE RESURRECTION BREAKFAST MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR WORK FOR GOD

What you learn from the resurrection breakfast can make a difference in your understanding of God and in your relationship to God. It can also make a difference in your work for God.

At the first miraculous catch of fish the nets broke. But John goes out of his way to tell us the nets did not break at the second catch. It is as if we are being told that before the resurrection, the resources of the disciples were inadequate for the job. They used what strength they had but it was not enough. But since the resurrection, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to help us carry out the work God has given disciples to do. And what is the work disciples are to do? Jesus said it at the first miraculous catch and several other times as well. He said, “You will fish for people” (Matt 4:19, Luke 5:10, Mk 1:17).

Disciples have work to do. Jesus wants disciples to fish for people. He was not telling them that he wanted them to teach other people how to catch fish in the Sea of Galilee. He was using fishing as a metaphor for the work of making new disciples (see Matt 28:18-20).

Jesus wants us to be part of his fishing crew. No, we’re not supposed to “hook” people. This is not about forcing people to do things against their will. It is not about manipulating people and doing violence to their personhood. It is about welcoming people into the Kingdom of God. It is about a gracious invitation that asks people to trust in Jesus Christ and demonstrating the love of God regardless of their response.

The atheistic German philosopher Nietzsche once said, “I could believe in a Savior if more of his followers looked like they were saved.” If you have received the “Good News” of Jesus Christ then act like you have received “Good News.” And others will see the light of Christ at work in your life and be drawn to the Savior.

What we learn from the resurrection breakfast can make a big difference in our work of making new disciples for God.

CONCLUSION

Seeking the Risen Lord can make a positive difference in how you experience the day. You will see a difference in how you understand God, how you relate to God, and how you fulfill God’s purpose for your life.

Several years ago the Florida Orange Juice Growers Association convinced the American

public to double their consumption of orange juice through its highly successful “not just for breakfast anymore” campaign. Celebrities like the late Arnold Palmer (professional golfer) persuaded us that the benefits of orange juice could be enjoyed at any time of the day. (By the way, the use of Arnold Palmer as a spokesperson was a “stroke” of genius.)

What is true of orange juice is even more true of the resurrection. We can enjoy the benefits of knowing and following Jesus not just for breakfast, but at any time; and not just on Easter, but each and every day of the year.