The Picnic on the Beach – John 21:1-19

v. 3 Peter is the decisive man of action. He couldn't just sit around doing nothing. The others went with him.

v. 5 "No!" If you have ever asked a fisherman who has tried all night to catch fish and caught nothing about his catch you won't find him in a cheerful mood! All he will say to you is a terse, grumpy "No".

v. 7 ***"It is the Lord!"*** – Remember this has happened before – Luke 5:4

v. 7 It was very typical of Peter to leap into the water. He didn't try to walk on it.

v. 10 ***"Bring some of the fish you have just caught."*** There was an amazing blend of the natural and the supernatural in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. If there is a boat, He will use it. If not, He will walk on the water. If there are fish, He uses them. If no fish, He multiplies what there is. There is no dichotomy.

v. 12 ***"Come and have breakfast."*** You might have had a bad night, but I'm going to give you a good morning.

v. 13 Notice the risen Lord of Glory serving His disciples as a waiter. This is our Servant King! Service is never beneath Him. Servanthood is in the heart of God. He enjoys serving us!

Introduction

John 21 is not written to prove the resurrection. In a sense, John's Gospel finishes with John 20:30-31. We can imagine John putting down his pen. He reads and re-reads John's Gospel and then senses that the Holy Spirit wants to include the picnic on the beach.

Why? **It was a 'shining forth' of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

Ps. 80:1 ***"Shine forth."*** The Greek word has the concept of 'a burst of light' – 'a shining forth'.

Paul uses the phrase God ***"Manifested in the flesh"***. 'Manifested' or 'revealed' (v. 1 and v. 14) is a word John often uses.

John 2:11: ***"This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and <u>manifested</u> His glory and His disciples believed in Him."***

Four areas of shining forth the glory of God on the beach that day

1. <u>We discover the two great concerns that are on our Father's heart</u>.

These were purposeless disciples confused and frustrated. They didn't know what to do. For about 3½ years they had followed Jesus, but this was physically impossible after the resurrection. The disciples were marking time – waiting for further orders. Peter was a decisive man of action. He couldn't just sit around doing nothing!

What is on the heart of God for you in …….? This is it!

a) **Fish for people**

b) **Feed the flock** ('tend' has the sense of guard)

Luke 5:4-11 – This is an account of their first commissioning given 3½ years before.

Jesus said to them, ***"Do not fear, from now on, you will be catching men."***

So what do the disciples of Jesus do? They are **fishers of men**.

After the resurrection the disciples were at a loss as to what they should do. Now on this same lake and also when they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing, there was a command, followed by a miracle.

Jesus was reminding them of their commission as disciples. The commission hadn't changed: "Fish for men." They were still followers of Jesus with a task to accomplish.

Now Jesus **adds** to that commission **a new element – be a feeder of the flock:**

v. 15 ***"Feed My lambs."***

v. 16 ***"Tend My sheep."***

v. 17 ***"Feed My sheep."***

Recommissioning often adds spiritual clarification and a new element.

Disciples are those who are **fishers of people** and **feeders/shepherds of the flock**.

So what is on the heart of God for us?

Remember! This is the Lord of Glory – the Lion – the Lamb, who has overcome sin, Satan, death, all the demonic forces etc.

What is on His heart for us to do? Be **a fisher** and be **a feeder**/guardian – a fisher of people and a feeder of the flock. This should be at the heart of our strategy!

There is a lovely strong word that is used of the Lord Jesus – **compassion**. This means to be moved in the depths of who you are. The Greeks put the seat of emotions in the gut – 'a gut feeling'. This is a very strong word for love (not pity as often in modern English).

Compassion always leads to action.

Five human conditions that evoke this feeling in the Lord Jesus:

1) **Sickness** – ***"He had compassion on the multitudes and He healed their sick."***

2) **Hunger** – ***"I have compassion on the multitudes, for they have been with Me three days."*** – no food.

3) **Bereavement** – The widow of Nain was leaving the city. She had lost her husband. Now her only son had died. This was a very deep tragedy in Middle East culture. Seeing her sorrow and fear Jesus was moved with compassion and raised the son to life again.

4) **Loneliness and alienation** – consider the lepers. They are sick with Hansen's disease (bacteria), but they are outcast from society. They couldn't be greeted. They are isolated.

Mother Teresa said, *"There is more suffering in the West through loneliness and isolation than in the East through malnutrition and hunger."*

When Jesus saw lepers He reached out and touched them and healed them.

5) **Compassion** – Mt. 9:36 – ***"When he saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless*** (the wolves were free to do as they wished). ***Like sheep without a shepherd*** (without being guarded and cared for)."

The Lord Jesus sees people like that today. He is still moved with compassion and He sends us out to be **fishers of men** and **feeders of the flock**. Why? He is moved with compassion. This is the motive for transformational evangelism and a focus on believers from a Muslim background – feeding/guarding.

So the first burden on our Father's heart is: **world mission – fishing and feeding**.

2. The second area of shining forth is that Jesus again reveals Himself as our Servant King.

- These men had been fishing all night. They were wet. They were cold. They were probably tired, irritable and hungry.
- You sense their disappointment and irritation in that terse, "No!"
- Not only that – there was an underlying emotional stress and confusion.

- What was their role now? They were followers of Jesus, but after the resurrection they couldn't follow Him because He had disappeared. So what should they do?
- Possibly they were still afraid of the authorities and retreated into their community.
- I want you to see that **Jesus meets them right where they are**.
- If we're going to commit ourselves to world mission, a thousand concerns immediately rush into our minds – fears, anxieties etc.
- We might know we are to fish for men and feed the flock – but…….!

Here is a lovely scene. Jesus meets them right where they are and gives them breakfast. The world is on His heart but He takes time to stop and make breakfast for a group of men who really need it. Jesus had built a little fire. The fish are already cooking. There is bread. He says, ***"Come and have breakfast"***.

A family in Dallas, Texas, who were involved in Christian work, had four children. They had a family prayer list. After supper they prayed through the list of family needs. The youngest son, aged 8, needed a **new** shirt. He was tired of hand-me-downs from older brothers. He said, *'Please put on the list that I need a size 7 shirt'*. They prayed for about three weeks. Then the mother was contacted by a believer in a different town who owned a clothing store. They had just finished the July sales. There were 12 shirts left, but only in size 7. He didn't want to keep them in stock. They were secretly delivered by a quiet arrangement of the family. That night the boy said, *'Dad we need to pray for my shirt'* His father replied, *'No, we don't! God has already answered!'* Then the older brother brought one shirt in and then another. With eyes like saucers as all 12 shirts were brought in, the boy asked, *'Has God gone into the shirt business?'*

Indeed, God is involved, and He always meets us just at our point of need. Have you had a bad week, a bad month, a bad year. Never mind, Jesus wants to meet you where you are. He cares for us – for His tired, frustrated, frightened, stressed, hungry disciples. He meets our needs. He builds a fire. There is fish and bread. He serves them breakfast. It is as if He says, *"You might have had a bad night, but I am going to give you a good morning."*

The world is on His heart but He bows low and serves breakfast. He meets their simple needs – bread and fish. This is the shining forth of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

It is essential for us to grasp this as we get into missions. God is interested in the work, but He is also very interested in you and longs to meet your needs.

3. The third area of shining forth lays down a great principle of Christian work.

Obedience precedes revelation.

v. 6 – ***"Throw your nets over the right side of the boat …."*** They did this and **then** they recognised Him. They didn't recognize Him **until** they obeyed Him!

Why did these disciples go fishing? They were certainly marking time.

- Were they bored? Maybe!
- Maybe they had run out of money! Jesus was no longer there to meet their daily needs in a physical sense. *"I'm going fishing"* gives the sense, *"I'm going back to what I know will best meet my financial needs."*
- So they went back to their secular job.
- After a very stressful and highly emotional time, it is good advice to go back **for a while** to doing the routine and the mundane. When you are emotionally exhausted this can take you out of the heat of exposed positions.
- Healing comes in doing the routine.

So they hadn't gone fishing for fun! They were not anglers. It was their business and they needed the money – resources!

This is a shining forth of Jehovah Jireh – the Lord who is the Provider. In Scripture there is never any indication that a lack of success is an indication of not being in the will of God. The Lord helped them to catch fish (provided lots of money) and He wanted them to learn an important principle.

If you look after the interests of God, God will look after you.

But before there is a revelation of His Glory as a Provider, there must be obedience on our part.

Remember: the obedience before provision. It is scary living this way, but it is a prelude to a great shining forth.

This is an essential understanding in missions! So Jesus gives them:

- Success in a secular area
- The recognition that they are on the move again. Peter's energy indicates inner healing.

4. The fourth great theme at the breakfast on the beach is:

The Recovery and Recommissioning of Peter (Jn. 21:15-19).

Peter's denial

- A very terrible denial for he was the leader
- A denial just when – humanly speaking – Jesus needed his support most just after the betrayal of Judas
- It was a horrible denial – not just once but three times
- Not just a slip of the tongue but a deliberate denial
- Not only a denial – but accompanied with cursing and swearing
- It was awful!

It is very, very important that after failure in the life of a disciple there is adequate recovery.

Failure is never final.

There is much failure in God's work. There is high attrition. Failure in our witness in the past haunts people now. This is a major reason why people leave missions altogether and drop out of churches.

When we fail **Jesus wants adequate recovery**. Every failure is redeemable! But failure has to be dealt with properly.

- Three times around the fire Peter denied his Lord. Now three times around the fire Peter affirms his love and loyalty to the Lord.
- Three times in the presence of his enemies he made a denial. Now three times in the presence of his friends he makes an affirmation of his love.
- Three times he denied his relationship to the Shepherd and the flock. Now three times he establishes his relationship to the flock and to the Shepherd.

Four steps in dealing with failure

<u>Step One</u>: Jesus reminds Peter who he is in the flesh/old nature.

Three times Jesus says, ***"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"***

This wasn't the usual way that Jesus addressed Peter. It was Peter, the rock – strong, dependable. **Peter is who you are by grace!**

There had been three years of daily affirmation that Peter was a 'new man'. But he hadn't been a rock! He had been 'sand'. So now Jesus reminds Peter who he is in the flesh.

If we live in the flesh, we will never please God and we will always let God and ourselves down. We need to be reminded of this often.

The crucifixion had just happened and there were two crucial aspects of the crucifixion.

- Jesus Christ was crucified **for me** – in my place – substitutionary atonement.
- Jesus Christ was crucified **as me** – as He died, I died.

Jesus wanted Peter to understand what happened on the Cross:

- That Jesus had died for him – for his failure, for his sin, for his swearing, for his cursing, for his fear and for his crisis of faith – 1 Pet. 2:24, ***"He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree".***
- That as Jesus died, so the old Simon, son of John, died. When Jesus died, you died. The old nature is dead (Rom. 6). It was Simon, son of John, who was afraid.

Who we are in the flesh will always let us down! We must **reckon** the old nature as dead. So Jesus reminded Peter who he is in the flesh, **so that** he could remember that Jesus had renamed him **a Rock**.

If we fail, we need to remember that the old has **died** and we are to reckon it dead. As we live in the Cross, we live in newness of life – stable – building blocks in the Kingdom! Sin doesn't need to rule over us.

<u>Step Two</u>: Jesus recovers Peter from his failure.

He wants Peter to understand two lovely things. If you have failed you must get hold of these two things:

(a) He wants Peter to know that he really is forgiven.

Why does Jesus say three times, ***"Do you love Me"?*** I would probably have said, *'Have you really repented? Are you really, really sorry?'* But this is not what Jesus does! This principle is very important. We need to note it well.

He that is forgiven much loves much.

The Lord Jesus is saying, *"Peter, if you have been touched by My grace, stop punishing yourself – stop analysing yourself – stop condemning yourself. If My forgiveness has touched your heart,* ***you will love much****."*

By asking the question, Jesus is trying to pull him into the goodness and freedom of forgiveness. The evidence of real repentance is not tears, but joy and love. Repentance and joy are always linked in the teaching of Jesus.

If you have really repented and God's forgiveness has touched your heart, there will be a release of joy and an eruption of love for the Lord Jesus.

But if you say, *"Oh dear, why did I do it again?"* You should stop punishing yourself – beating yourself. You might feel a bit religious, but that's not **freedom**. There's no joy and no love – that's bondage. So Jesus asks three times, ***"Peter, do you love Me?"*** He wants to pull Peter into the goodness and freedom of being free from guilt and shame because he who is forgiven much loves much!

(b) Jesus wants healing deep down in Peter's heart.

The third time that Peter heard, ***"Do you love Me?"*** he was hurt (v. 17). Jesus kept probing until He touched the hurts.

- There is a difference between forgiveness and freedom.
- Charles Wesley wrote, *"He breaks the power of cancelled sin."*

- You can feel forgiven – have had your sin cancelled – and yet still not feel free. The shame of failure still shadows your life. You are still hurting.
- Jesus kept probing until Peter said, *"Ouch Lord, that hurts"*.
- He touches it because He wants to heal it.
- Into our failures, Jesus wants to breathe His healing – His wholeness.
- If it is healed, that weak place won't fail again.

Don't bury it. Don't push it down. It will rise again.

Let Jesus set you free!

A key quality for successful leadership is **failure**! Failure refines our character and prepares us for future ministry, **if** it gets properly dealt with.

<u>Step Three</u>: Peter gets re-commissioned – and so do we.

So often we put the major emphasis on the correctness of doctrine and the uprightness of life. Yet when Peter is re-commissioned for service, it is neither doctrine, nor conduct that is the Lord Jesus' major focus. **It is Peter's love for Him**.

Perhaps Peter went fishing, because he felt disqualified to do anything for the Lord Jesus.

The first-time (v. 15) Jesus asked, ***"Peter, do you really love Me more than <u>these</u>?"***
What are the 'these'? – more than these men? than the other disciples? Maybe, but more likely it refers to **these <u>things</u>** – the boats, the nets, the fish, the lake, the mountain, the town, home!

"Do you love me more than these things?"

Peter had been an ambitious man – a businessman. He had several boats. He had nets and hired helpers. He was an entrepreneur – a YUPPIE of Galilee.

Your idol is what you think about in your idle moments!

Peter had some idle moments. He went fishing. Did this indicate his idol?

Before we can 'feed lambs', before we can get involved in world mission, **Jesus will have to deal with our ambitions.** ***"Do you love Me more than these?"***

Before you feed the flock, your ambition needs to be dealt with. Selfish ambition in any work of God ruins that work of God.

There was a successful Christian engineer. He had a beautiful home and two cars in the garage. He sat down with his six-year-old daughter and looked at a Wycliffe magazine. They saw a picture of a tribal people in the Amazon. Their conversation went like this:

Daddy, why are they looking so sad?	Because they're sick.
Daddy, why are they sick?	Because they are poor.
Daddy, why are they so poor?	Because there's a lot of injustice.
Daddy, why is there injustice?	Because they have never heard about Jesus. (Children can ask awfully hard questions!)
Daddy, why haven't they heard about Jesus?	Because no one has gone to tell them.

Daddy, why don't we go?

The engineer heard Jesus say, *"Do you love Me more than … your job, your comfort…etc."*
A year later the family joined Wycliffe Bible Translators.

It doesn't often mean giving up degrees etc. but we need to hear the Lord Jesus say, ***"Do you love Me more than these things?"*** If you can say, *"Yes"*, then you can feed sheep.

The second time Jesus asks, ***"Do you* truly *love Me?"***

A shepherd isn't into feeding sheep for himself. In Jn. 10:12-13 Jesus distinguishes between **hirelings** and true shepherds. A hireling is in it for himself. A true shepherd lays his life down for the sheep (Jn. 10:11).

Mission has too many hirelings. It never works. They are in it for what they can get out of it. They speak about my ministry, my gifts, my future, my plans, my strategies. ***"Do you truly love Me?"*** Only true shepherds can say, *"Yes"* and true shepherds lay down their lives for the sheep!

Peter had had an amazing three years with Jesus. Perhaps he was tempted to follow Jesus for what he could get out of it. It won't do!

The third time: *"Do you truly love Me?"*

Three times Jesus says that they are 'My sheep'. How do you show your love for Jesus? It is by your love for the sheep – His sheep. I don't show how much I love Jesus by what I sing or what I do in meetings or what I preach. I show it by how much I love His sheep – fellow believers.

Sheep are wayward and stupid. The Biblical picture of sheep/us is not flattering at all. It brings our self-esteem to rock bottom, but we are to love fellow disciples – wayward and stupid as they are. We are to feed them, care for them, meet their needs, guard them against all predators and rescue them. We serve sheep because they belong to the Lord Jesus and He loves them. Before we can feed the flock, there needs to be a **refining of our love for the Lord Jesus i**n our hearts.

Finally: Jesus affirms Peter's loyalty.

- There is a play on words – *'agapeo'* and *'phileo'*
- Peter could only use the lesser word, *"I am your friend."* Peter had previously boasted of his love for Jesus and how it surpassed that of his fellow disciples. Now, after a very public failure and denial, he won't admit the quality of his love for the Lord. He qualifies his love. He can't say *'Agape'* the ultimate kind of love – the Lord's own love,.
- Before the Cross, he had said he would die for Jesus. Now boasting was gone and Peter couldn't say, *"I love you Lord."*
- But Jesus wants to affirm Peter.
- The Lord knew **his heart**. He knew his failure and He knew Peter would never betray Him again.
- Peter, you will die for Me by crucifixion. I am telling you this because, ***"I know that you love Me"***. You will never again fail Me by denying Me.
- There was shock at first and then a huge smile on the face of Peter.
- The stress was gone!

I will be faithful to the finish. I will be faithful to the fight. I will be faithful to the faith. I will be a rock. I will never be 'sand' again.

The Lord knows our hearts, and He wants to affirm you.