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**Just Fishing**

**John 21.1-14**

**Series: Signs of Life**

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- I. **“I’m going fishing!”**
- A. What is your least favorite thing to do as a Christian?
    - 1. A lot of things come to mind as possibilities
      - a. We’d all prefer not to be martyrs if we could help it
      - b. Now there were plenty of Christian martyrs over the centuries in the world
      - c. And there are plenty of Christian martyrs today in the world – brothers and sisters being murdered for their faith
      - d. Sometimes by officials of various states which are antagonistic to Christianity
      - e. Sometimes by others who act on their own and who have great animosity to Christianity, and various governments do little to prevent it
    - 2. We’d also like not to suffer if we could help it
      - a. Suffer for the faith, that is
      - b. Short of becoming a martyr are those who find themselves tortured for Christ
      - c. Such was the case of Richard Wurmbrand
      - d. Man of Jewish ancestry, he became a Christian
      - e. He preached in bomb shelters and rescued Jews in WWII
      - f. But he provoked the ire of the Romanian communist regime when he preached that communism and Christianity were irreconcilable
      - g. He was arrested by the regime, imprisoned for 14 years, and tortured
      - h. We’d prefer not to be tortured if we could help it
  - B. So certainly martyrdom and torturous suffering are things we Christians would like to avoid if we could, if it were up to us
    - 1. But most of us have not experienced those kinds of issues as Christians
      - a. While it may be more and more difficult to be Christians in our nation than it used to be, most of us are not subjected to that kind of suffering
  - C. I would propose that the least favorite thing to do for us Christians, the thing that most of us do actually experience from time to time, is waiting
    - 1. That’s right – waiting
      - a. We know God has something for us to do
      - b. But not yet; it’s not the right time

- D. Sometimes the waiting has to do with our health
1. We have symptoms of one sort or another
    - a. Tests are done
    - b. But the results take days, or even weeks
    - c. And then the results are ambiguous or inconclusive
    - d. And more tests are ordered
    - e. And again, we wait
  2. Sometimes we're called in ministry
    - a. But the process can take a good bit of time for everything to unfold
    - b. That was like the process that brought us here
    - c. We started here 10 years ago this February
    - d. But the process started nearly 10 months prior to that
    - e. And a lot of that time was waiting
    - f. Sometimes when we couldn't even be sure God was calling us
    - g. And we couldn't even share it with most of our friends
    - h. And so we waited
    - i. And waiting is one of the least favorite things to do
- E. Consider the disciples
1. They had experienced the most monumental emotional roller coaster one could ever imagine
    - a. They had wholly devoted themselves to this Jewish rabbi – this Jesus of Nazareth – for three years
    - b. They really believed he was the Messiah
    - c. Their hopes reached a zenith when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey – fulfilling Messianic scriptures
    - d. The children and followers crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!
    - e. And yet in one short week, they had all turned against Him
    - f. Prompted by the Jewish leaders, the crowds cried out against Him
    - g. And the Romans crucified Him
    - h. And their hopes were dashed
  2. Until, that is, one of their women came running to them that Sunday morning
    - a. With the bizarre story about an empty tomb
  3. And sure enough, this rabbi had risen!
    - a. And He showed up in an upper room where they'd been hiding out for fear of the Romans
    - b. Appearing through locked doors of all things!
  4. And He did the same thing the following week – through another locked door, appearing to the confused disciples
    - a. Encountering Thomas for the first time
    - b. Yes, that Thomas
    - c. Not “doubting Thomas” – but unbelieving Thomas as we learned when we studied that passage
    - d. Thomas, who was sure that nothing could convince him that this

- Jesus was alive – surely not the testimony of some crazed women
- e. And even the disciples own testimony was unconvincing to him
  - f. But there He was – and Thomas worshiped!
- F. But then what?
1. A lot of people think that the gospel of John ended right there
  2. Final words: John 20:30–31 (ESV) — 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 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.
    - a. That should have been the end
  3. They think Chapter 21 is an edition by a later editor
    - a. Those two verses, from a literary perspective, tie everything together with bow
    - b. And that’s the end
- G. But it’s not the end
1. There is another chapter
    - a. And it’s an important one
    - b. Important one because it teaches us much about what the church is like
    - c. What the true church – the church of all those, as we’ve seen in our study of John, who have been born again
    - d. Who have heard and recognized the voice of the shepherd
    - e. Who have been taken out of the world by the Father and given to Christ
    - f. Who have learned what it means to abide in Christ
- H. It’s the church that, although confused and perplexed and afraid as they sequestered themselves in Jerusalem
1. Nevertheless stuck together and did what Jesus told them to do
    - a. That is, go to Galilee
    - b. Because in Galilee – the place where most of them began their journey with Jesus – they would again meet Jesus
  2. But then, they waited
    - a. And waited
    - b. And eventually, they got tired of twiddling their thumbs, waiting
- I. **John 21:1–14** (ESV) —
1. 1 After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.
  2. 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.
  3. 3 Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.”
  4. They said to him, “We will go with you.”
  5. They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.
  6. 4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.
  7. 5 Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?”

8. They answered him, "No."
9. 6 He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."
10. So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.
11. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"
12. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.
13. 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.
14. 9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.
15. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."
16. 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them.
17. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.
18. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."
19. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.
20. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.
21. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

## II. Bookends

- A. One of the reasons I think Chapter 21 is an authentic part of the Gospel of John is that it provides bookends for the book as a whole
- B. Chapter 1 is known as the Prologue for the Gospel of John
  1. Verses 1-14 in particular
    - a. But the whole of Chapter 1 sets the stage for the Gospel
    - b. Introduces the key characters in the story
    - c. Just as any piece of good literature does
- C. Well, Chapter 21 is the Epilogue
  1. Coming back to the key characters
    - a. Bringing closure to a number of their stories
    - b. Tying up even more elements of the story than if we just stopped at the end of Chapter 20
- D. Prologue opens with the story of the Preincarnate Christ
  1. With the Word in the beginning
    - a. Creating all things
    - b. The source of life
    - c. Life that is the light of men
  2. And then coming into the world
- E. The Epilogue is about the Resurrected Christ
  1. The Lord of the Church
  2. Meeting the Church

3. Directing the Church
  4. Growing the Church
  5. Loving the Church
- F. And the people introduced in Chapter 1 make their final appearances in Chapter 21
1. There were seven in all
    - a. Simon Peter
    - b. Thomas (the twin, or Didymus)
    - c. Nathanael of Cana
    - d. The sons of Zebedee (James and John)
    - e. Two others
  2. Simon Peter was introduced to us in Chapter 1
    - a. And he was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew
  3. Nathanael's only mention is in Chapter 1
    - a. He was introduced to Jesus by Philip
    - b. Famously wondered whether "anything good" can come out of Nazareth
    - c. That Nathanael shows up again in Chapter 21 makes us think immediately of the parallel with Chapter 1
  4. John, the author of the gospel, is one of the sons of Zebedee
    - a. Though not explicitly mentioned, it's likely he's around in Chapter 1 as Jesus began to collect disciples
    - b. Along with his brother James
  5. The other disciples who are explicitly mentioned in Chapter 1 are Andrew and Philip
    - a. I'm inclined to think they are the "two others of his disciples" who show up in Chapter 21
    - b. Can't be absolutely sure, but it adds to idea of an epilogue
    - c. That the group that started with Jesus are there in the end
- G. The only other to find his way into Chapter 21 is Thomas
1. Yes, that Thomas, the doubter – no, the one who was unbelieving until he met Jesus in that second post-resurrection appearance
    - a. Who then became a genuine worshiper
  2. Evidently, Jesus had business to do with Thomas
    - a. Just as He had business to do with Peter
    - b. Restoring them to the community of faith after their veritable collapse of faith in the events leading up to and culminating in the crucifixion
- H. So Chapters 1 and 21 are bookends
1. Jesus the preincarnate Son of God who becomes incarnate
  2. And Jesus the Lord of the Church
  3. And the Church
    - a. Made up of a rag-tag bunch of fishermen, unbelievers, malcontents
  4. Boice: Can we miss that the church is made up of those who were doubters, deniers, and sinners of many varieties, but who have been

brought to faith by Christ and have had their sins forgiven? These are the ones who do Christian work – normal people, with all the failings we are heir to, not fictitious characters of superhuman faith and fortitude.

- I. And that ought to give us great encouragement
  - 1. And even more to see what this represents
    - a. The bunch that started with Jesus, end with Jesus
    - b. Jesus has lost none of them – as He promised in John 17
    - c. Through thick and thin, they are all still there
  - 2. And Jesus will not lose you either as you continue to trust in Him
- J. So if Jesus, in the Epilogue, shows Himself to be the Lord of the Church, what sort of Church is it that He leads

### III. **The Waiting Church**

- A. The first thing we observe is that this is the waiting church
  - 1. The disciples have gone to Galilee as instructed
    - a. But then, Jesus hadn't shown up
    - b. And they were just hanging out
  - 2. What were they to think?
    - a. It's not as if Jesus had given them some homework assignment
    - b. He'd told them to go to Galilee and he would meet them there
    - c. But He didn't tell them what to do when they got there
- B. That can be a little disconcerting, even disorienting – this whole waiting business
  - 1. And you, I'm sure, know what I'm talking about
    - a. We've all wondered what we're supposed to do
    - b. While we don't have anything to do!
- C. Waiting can get you into trouble
  - 1. Remember Saul
    - a. How he was to go to Gilgal after mustering the Israelite army against the Philistines and wait for Samuel there
    - b. But seven days had passed – the time Samuel said he would come to meet him
    - c. And Saul got antsy – tired of waiting
    - d. And his troops got antsy too – and started to go AWOL
  - 2. So without waiting for Samuel, Saul offered the burnt offerings and peace offerings which he was not authorized to do
    - a. Then Samuel shows up
    - b. And Saul is in big trouble
    - c. How much trouble?
    - d. Well, it cost him the kingdom!
  - 3. Waiting is hard
    - a. And if you don't wait well, you can get into big trouble
- D. And then, some Christians wait by doing nothing
  - 1. Like some apocalyptic cult
    - a. They quit their jobs, run off into the countryside, and sit and wait for Jesus to return

- b. But Jesus has never told us when He would return
    - c. In fact, He told the Church that no one knows when He will return
  - 2. So to presume that you know that He's coming day after tomorrow
    - a. And quit your job
    - b. And go off to the hillside to wait
    - c. Well – that's just silly!
    - d. Worse – it's presumptuous – because you don't know what you're doing
- E. But more often than not, we're simply paralyzed by waiting
  - 1. We don't make plans
    - a. We don't make arrangement for the future, as best as we know how to do that
  - 2. So, in general, the church has trouble waiting
- F. So what do these disciples – this Church – do?
  - 1. Well, Peter – the leader of the group – decides to do what he's always done
    - a. He's a fisherman by trade
    - b. So are James and John – the sons of Zebedee
    - c. So they decide to go fishing
    - d. Peter: "I'm going fishing"
    - e. They said to him, "We will go with you."
  - 2. This is good!
    - a. When you don't know what to do, do what you know
    - b. And that's what they do
  - 3. Fishing is a valuable occupation
    - a. Human beings need to eat
    - b. Fish is good to eat
    - c. So for their own sakes, and others – they decide to go fishing
- G. And we should do the same thing
  - 1. Do what we know we can do
    - a. As long as it is a valuable vocation
    - b. Legally and morally appropriate
    - c. Contributing to the welfare of society
    - d. Go ahead and do it
  - 2. While we wait for Jesus
- H. And who knows – maybe Jesus will show up in the midst of your work
  - 1. Which is exactly what happens
  - 2. They've been out all night fishing
    - a. They've caught nothing
  - 3. And this guy shows up on the shore – they're about 100 yards off shore
    - a. And calls out to them
  - 4. And it turns out this guy is Jesus!
    - a. Jesus shows up
    - b. While they're waiting
    - c. But not while they're doing nothing

- d. But while they're doing what they know they can do
  - e. Which is fishing
- I. Let me make an application here
1. There are lots of things to do at Shell Point
    - a. You've probably already learned about that
  2. And in at least one respect, we're all waiting
    - a. Waiting for Jesus to return
    - b. Or waiting for us to go to Jesus
  3. But most us, while we still can, do things while we wait
  4. One of the things we can do while we wait is get involved in Bible studies
    - a. TVC has lots of Bible study groups, a bunch of small groups
    - b. And one of the reasons we're still here – and why we're still waiting – is that God is not finished growing us
    - c. He wants us to continue our study of the scriptures
    - d. He wants us to grow in our prayer lives, in our prayer ministries
    - e. He wants us to encourage one another through those small groups
    - f. Those are all good things to do while we wait
  5. But they're not the only things we can do while we wait around here
    - a. We can go fishing
    - b. There are people in the community who can do that, who love to do that
    - c. If you can do that – you should do it – while you wait
    - d. Or you can go run your remote-controlled sail boats
    - e. There are people in the community who can do that, who love to do that
    - f. If you can do that – you should! While you wait
    - g. There are people who do woodworking
    - h. There are people in the community who love to do that
    - i. If you can do that, and love to do that – you should! While you wait
    - j. Get the picture?
    - k. Maybe it's photography; maybe it's pottery; maybe it's painting; maybe it's kayaking; maybe it's pickle ball; maybe even golf
  6. And here's the advantage in doing those things
    - a. You're not just killing time
    - b. Jesus might just show up while you're doing those things
    - c. And if you're doing them with others – many of whom are not involved in TVC – you might introduce them to Jesus while you do what you know to do
    - d. While you wait
- J. The waiting Church is not the paralyzed church; not the time-killing church; it's certainly not the wait-on-the-hilltop for Jesus church
1. It's the church that does what it knows to do, what it's gifted to do
    - a. Because Jesus shows up when you do it!



IV. **The Fruitful Church**

- A. Here's the thing
  - 1. These guys went fishing
    - a. But **they weren't "just fishing"**
- B. Not all of Jesus' first disciples were fishermen
  - 1. But a bunch of them were
    - a. And fishing around Galilee was what most people understood, at least, even if they weren't themselves fishermen
  - 2. So Jesus used fishing to teach them about what it meant to minister
    - a. He told them to leave their nets, not so they would stop fishing
    - b. But so they would become fishers of men
  - 3. They were to find (catch) others who would become disciples
- C. And so when Jesus shows up on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius (Sea of Galilee) He uses fishing, once again, to teach them
  - 1. To teach them about how to be a fruitful church
- D. He says, "Children, do have any fish?"
  - 1. Remember – he's a football field away from them
- E. And they answered, "No!"
  - 1. And then He said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."
- F. Now this is classic Jesus
  - 1. They've seen this moving before!
  - 2. This is, as Yogi Berra would say, "deja vu all over again"
- G. **Luke 5** – they'd fished all night; caught nothing
  - 1. After teaching the crowd, Jesus said to Peter and his entourage – "Let's go fishing!"
  - 2. Peter: "I don't think that's a good idea, Jesus. We've been fishing all night and caught nothing. Nothing's biting right now."
  - 3. Jesus: "Let's go anyway"
  - 4. They do – and they catch a huge number of fish
    - a. So many that the nets were breaking
- H. So here they are again
  - 1. Jesus says, "Throw you nets on the other side"
  - 2. They think, "That's silly! Don't you know that fish can swim under the boat. It doesn't make any difference on what side of the boat you throw your net."
  - 3. But they do it; seems vaguely familiar
    - a. And yep – 153 fish jump into the net when they drop it on the other side of the boat
- I. The Luke 5 passage is the occasion when Jesus taught them that from now on, they would be fishing for men
  - 1. And now, they were learning how to fish for men
- J. Here's the point
  - 1. **Only go fishing with Jesus**
    - a. When I say "fishing" I'm talking about the fishing for men variety

- the ministry of fishing
  - b. Without Jesus, you catch nothing
  - c. You can do the work of the ministry without Jesus
  - d. But apart from Jesus, you accomplish nothing
- 2. Nothing of eternal value
  - a. Nothing for the kingdom
- 3. Even if you do things to get great crowds
  - a. Even if people get excited about you and your ministry
  - b. Even if people come to your church in droves
  - c. If you do it in your own strength, with your own resources
  - d. It will all come to nothing
  - e. Nothing for eternity
  - f. Nothing for the kingdom
- K. Fishing with Jesus means that you do what He tells you to do
  - 1. Even if He tells you to do something that makes no sense to you
    - a. Even if He tells you to drop the net on the other side of the boat – ridiculous!
  - 2. If you do what He tells you – the Lord’s work in the Lord’s way
    - a. Following the Lord’s direction
    - b. Then you do real work for the kingdom
- L. They catch 153 fish
  - 1. And the net, this time, doesn’t break
  - 2. Which means, they don’t lose any fish
  - 3. Just like Jesus didn’t lose any of those the Father has given Him
    - a. He will not lose any of those who come to Him through your ministry
    - b. When you do it with Jesus
    - c. When you fish with Jesus
    - d. Under the direction of Jesus

V. **The Supplied Church**

- A. So they drop the nets on the other side
  - 1. And they catch a multitude of fish
  - 2. And they recognize that it’s Jesus on the shore
    - a. And Peter jumps in the water to go see and embrace Him (must have been a wet hug)
    - b. And the others follow dragging the fish
- B. And what do they find?
  - 1. Jesus feeding them
  - 2. He’s already got the fire going
    - a. He’s cooking some fish (probably picked a few up at Publix on the way over)
  - 3. Tells them to bring some of what they’ve caught
    - a. And they had the greatest fish-fry ever!
- C. Because what Jesus does is that He supplies the church that He saves

1. He never just saves them and leaves them on their own; leaves them to fend for themselves
  2. He answers the prayer that He has taught them to pray – “Give us this day our daily bread”
    - a. And He does!
- D. Jesus supplies the Church
1. Peter: He has given us everything we need for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1.3)
    - a. Guess where Peter learned that?
    - b. Probably learned in a number of places – but it was certainly reinforced on the shore of Galilee as Jesus cooked breakfast for them
- E. Jesus is Lord of the Church
1. And He supplies the Church
    - a. He’s the Lord and Quartermaster of the Church

VI. **The Fellowship Church**

- A. And then the Church eats
1. We ought not to diminish the value of the Church eating
    - a. Jesus gathers around the table, on the shore of Galilee, these seven disciples
  2. It wasn’t just about food
  3. We don’t know what they said
    - a. But we do know they enjoyed table fellowship together
  4. That’s often the way it happens
    - a. Around food
    - b. Where we share with one another
    - c. Where we tell stories
    - d. Where we laugh
    - e. Where we encourage one another
    - f. Where we love one another
- B. **Jesus is the Lord of the Church at fellowship**
1. In which we all hold things in common – that what fellowship, koinonia, means
- C. That’s why we need to meet together
1. Jesus didn’t send them a Zoom invitation
  2. Jesus didn’t tell them to tune in to Galilee TV, Channel 13
  3. He invited them to come with Him – in person
    - a. And when we can – we should
  4. We should do this on Sundays
    - a. Why not more than once?
  5. We should do this on Wednesdays?
    - a. Where we meet one another – and Jesus in prayer
    - b. Together
  6. We should do this anytime we can

- D. Now, don't misunderstand
  - 1. We're grateful for TV and for technology
    - a. For those who are unable to get together, to be here
    - b. Those are great blessings
  - 2. And we, at TVC, have invested substantially since Covid, in our digital ministries
    - a. You should tune in to Channel 13 if you're in Shell Point
    - b. Or to the internet to our media web page
    - c. To see what we've got going there
    - d. Quite remarkable – the teaching, the music
  - 3. But it's no substitute to being together
    - a. Jesus gathers the Church
    - b. The Fellowship Church
    - c. And they eat, and they share, and they laugh, and they love
  - 4. We at TVC are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ
    - a. That's why it's a community
    - b. We do it together – with Jesus

VII. **“It is the Lord!”**

- A. All of this leads to John's exclamation, “It is the Lord!”
- B. In the waiting church
  - 1. In the fruitful church
  - 2. In the supplied church
  - 3. In the fellowship church
- C. We see the Lord!
  - 1. We see Him at work
  - 2. We see Him at play
    - a. Do you see the playfulness of Jesus in this episode?
    - b. “Hey, throw your net on the other side of the boat!”
    - c. Hilarious!
    - d. Sometimes we get so serious we miss the humor of Jesus
    - e. Some of us, I'm convinced, have been baptized in vinegar
    - f. We see Him at work; we see Him at play
  - 3. We see His love for His children
  - 4. We see His enjoyment of their personalities
  - 5. We see His care for His lambs
  - 6. We see Jesus
- D. We see the Lord!
  - 1. Do you see the Lord?