

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

April 24, 2022

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: The Gifts of Jesus**

(Studies in John's Gospel, leading to Easter)

#### **Gone Fishin'**

(John 21:1-13)

#5

#### **Introduction: The end of the story...**

In the four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - we learn Jesus' life story.

Each Gospel writer includes action and tension and drama in the telling of the story. He helps us know the characters better as the story unfolds.

Then, there is conflict. The conflict builds as Jesus is arrested, tortured, and then killed. End of the story.

But, no, Jesus' death and burial wasn't the end of His story. The four Gospels all go on to record His resurrection from the dead.

And we celebrated His resurrection last Sunday on Easter.

At Encuentro, you remembered some of what happened on that first Easter. So did we, here on the English side. Same thing at the sunrise service.

All the details of the story combine to tell us that the too-good-to-be-true story is true. Jesus is alive.

And because He is alive, we who believe in Him have hope and joy and purpose - and LIFE, abundant and eternal!

That's what John tells us over and over again in his Gospel. It's a great story. So, resurrection is the end of the story.

No, the resurrection wasn't the end of the story, either.

In fact, three out of the four books written about Jesus don't end with the noun of resurrection, but with a verb - a call to action - for those who now believe in Jesus.

This morning, we'll follow John's final "end of the story," and we'll pay close attention to the verb.

I'll be giving the first half of John 21 - yes, in English - and Manuel will finish up with the second half in Spanish.

The scene is set at the Sea of Galilee / Tiberius.

This is a very personal look at Jesus as John records a commission from Jesus to the first disciples and to all of us who also follow Him.

As we turn to John 21, we remember that the disciples we are about to see believe in Jesus.

So, the purpose of His interaction with them here is not to *convince* them to believe. They believe.

The point here is to *commission* them to act on the truth they now believe.

He does this by giving them a fishing lesson.

## **"I'm Going Fishin'" (vv. 2-3)**

*Seven disciples at the nets (vv. 1-2)*

**[1] After these things Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He revealed Himself in this way: [2] Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.**

Galilee - the northern section of Israel - was rich with lots of memories for all the disciples.

Galilee had been their home. It was where they had all met Jesus and gotten to know Him.

And notice that this group of disciples were almost certainly not all fishermen.

We know that Peter and the sons of Zebedee were, James and John.

But it is likely that the others were raised in different social classes, had different upbringings. They were a diverse group.

But here they all are, weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, together, working together.

In this we see the diversity of those who follow Jesus. Just like you and I are English and Spanish speakers, young and old, wealthy or not, all taking our next steps with Jesus.

Weeks have passed since the gloom of Good Friday and that sad Saturday. The first blush of Easter excitement was gone.

They were out of the pressure cooker of Jerusalem, on their home turf of Galilee, when Peter got a bright idea.

*The disciples got "skunked" (v. 3)*

**[3a] Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing."**

Today, at least in some contexts, the words, "I'm goin' fishing," speak volumes.

"I'm going fishing" can be the ultimate recreational, kick back and take-it-easy phrase. To say, "I'm going fishing" is to say, "I'm getting away from it all."

But that's NOT what Peter meant. Peter was a professional fisherman. For him, "**I'm going fishing**" meant, "*I'm going to work.*"

So, off he went to fish, and the other six disciples of Jesus joined him.

And it was work!

They didn't take rods and reels. They fished with heavy nets. And since fish bite better at night, they threw their nets all night long.

On this particular night, Peter and his friends had what I call "a Dave Smith fishing trip."

These were experienced, professional fisherman, and they didn't get so much as a nibble.

**[3b]...They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing.**

I can relate.

It's been a long, long time since I've gone fishing, but when I did go fishing, I never had to mess with the smelly job of cleaning fish or carry a full stringer of fish to the car.

I always got skunked. So, these disciples and I have the shared experience of NOT catching fish.

But I've never experienced anything like what happened next.

### **Fishing with Jesus (vv. 4-7)**

*A risky greeting (vv. 4-6)*

***[4] But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. [5] So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish to eat, do you?"***

It was Jesus, but the guys in the boat didn't recognize that it was Jesus. and here, Jesus did some things that I would never do.

First, He called the fishermen "***children.***"

The next time you go to Corpus Christi and see seven rugged men coming in from a night of fishing, I do NOT recommend that you address them as "*children.*"

It'll get their attention, but not in the way you hope.

Second, Jesus pointed out their lack of success in fishing. Again, it is generally not a good idea to yell out, "*Hey, I see you didn't catch any fish!*"

But if these words would be mistakes for us, they weren't for Jesus. He knew exactly what He was doing.

Following their answer (a sulky "*No*"), He did a third thing that I would neither do nor recommend.

He offered a suggestion.

There is nothing more frustrating to fishermen, or to auto mechanics, or plumbers than listening to an arm-chair quarterback spout advice from the sidelines.

***[6a] And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find the fish."***

Here is this guy telling THEM, professional fishermen who have been out fishing all night long, how to fish.

Amazingly, though - and to their credit - they took the Stranger's advice.

***[6b]...So they cast it, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great quantity of fish.***

No, it wasn't as if they didn't know that they could fish off both sides of the boat. And of course, during the night, they had tried both sides.

But as soon as they did what the Guy on the beach told them to do, their "luck" changed.

And as soon as John saw the fish racing for the nets, something clicked.

*"Hey, isn't that Jesus?!" (v. 7)*

***[7a] Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved (John) said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"***

If John was the first to perceive that this catch was Jesus' work, Peter was the first to do something about it.

***[7b]...So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.***

Peter was thrilled to see Jesus! He took the quickest way to the shore - swimming - letting his six good friends to row themselves back to shore.

## Breakfast on the Beach (vv. 8-13)

*The disciples arrived with their catch (vv. 8-11)*

When they got the boat to shore, dragging the net full of fish behind them, they saw that Jesus already had a fire going, with fish frying, along with bread, hot and ready to eat.

***[10] Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." [11] So Simon Peter went up and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, 153; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.***

That last comment, the counting of the fish, lends an undeniable air of credibility to the story.

There weren't "a lot of fish" or "over a hundred." No. The count was precise to the last fish: one hundred and fifty-three.

And you may know, some Bible scholars believe that "153" stands for something, that it is symbolic.

Me? I think the point is that they caught a bunch of fish.

*Jesus gave them fish and bread (v. 13)*

***Then, [12] Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to inquire of Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord.***

As they prepared to eat, John tells us in deliciously memorable words how Jesus served them breakfast.

***[13] Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise.***

If those words sound familiar, it is because they are strikingly similar to what John wrote when he described Jesus breaking the bread and distributing the fish at the feeding of the five thousand. (John 6)

I am convinced that Jesus wanted the disciples to tie in what He was doing **HERE**, on the beach, with what He had done **THERE**, with the crowds.

At the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus multiplied fish and loaves and fed a great crowd of people.

On that day He was the One responsible for seeing that everyone present got food. He provided.

The purpose of that miracle was to show to the disciples that they had to depend on Jesus' provision as they served people in His Name.

Same for us. As we serve people in Jesus' Name today, we need the strength and wisdom and love He provides. We are dependent on Him to do through us what only He can do.

That's the first thing this morning at the beach highlights.

Now, for the second thing. And you're going to think that this is the biggest "Duh" in the world.

He wanted to remind them - and us - that "fishing" is close to His heart.

In their gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all quote Jesus as saying something like this when He called the disciples:

*"So far, you've been fishing for fish. Follow Me, and you'll catch people who will join you in following Me."*

John is the only Gospel writer who doesn't include an early scene where Jesus calls to the fishermen, *"Follow Me and I'll make you fishers of men!"*

But it's impossible to miss that message here, at the end.

A big part of following Jesus involves fishing.

Fish aren't lost at sea, and fishermen aren't doing the fish any favors by fishing.

But people without Jesus are lost. And followers of Jesus are never more loving than when they go fishing for people who are far from God.

Last Sunday (Easter Sunday) we listened as John told us about two of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to His disciples. He appeared to them in a room in Jerusalem. The second time He appeared, He told Thomas, "**Believe!**"

Both of those appearances were to foster FAITH.

The biggest purpose of this meeting on the beach is to foster FISHING.

Jesus wants you and me to go fishing:  
at work.  
in our schools.  
in our neighborhoods.  
at play.

And we "fish" as we lovingly share the good news that our Jesus - the One who died and rose again - offers eternal life to those who believe.

Your "Sea of Tiberias" is your day-to-day world. Fish right where you are.

Now, if your fishing attempts of late have looked like a Dave Smith fishing expedition - not many engaged conversations, not many opportunities - well, maybe it's time to try the other side of the boat.

Maybe it's time to...

...pray.

...to ask God to open your heart to want to go fishing for Jesus.

...to ask God to open your eyes to opportunities to fish for Jesus.

...to ask God to give you boldness, wisdom, and love in opening your mouth to fish for Jesus.

Trust that God will provide what you need to share the news that has changed everything for you and that will change everything for the friend you're with.

Go fish. Fish, in Jesus' Name! Bring your friends to Jesus.

\*\*\*Invite Manuel up for part 2.