**WEEK FOUR THOUGHTS**

(Borrowed from …. https://www.provroanoke.org/blog/fishing-breakfast-care)

**WEEK FOUR Monday 26th & Thursday 29th May**

John 21:1-14 With the disciples on the shores of Galilee.

I found some notes which suggested this passage has three messages:

**1. Failure Apart from Christ (vv. 1-3)**

We’re at a ‘scene change’ if you will in John’s gospel. All of this takes place not in Jerusalem but in Galilee. And of course, we are expecting this because in Matthew 28, the angel at the resurrection said that Jesus was heading to Galilee and the disciples are in Galilee fishing on the Lake of Tiberias, which is also known as, the Lake or Sea of Galilee.

And now, seven disciples have gone fishing. Peter is clearly the ringleader, and several others have volunteered to go out with him.

They were fishing at night, which is an important detail that we can easily overlook. One of John’s favourite themes is light and darkness. Darkness represents worldliness and the absence of God’s presence, while light represents righteousness and God’s presence.

Which of course makes you look at verse 3 a little differently: “They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.” In other words, they went fishing by themselves, at night, and Jesus is nowhere to be found.

It’s impossible to read this passage without thinking about Luke chapter 5 when Jesus first called his disciples and told them that he would make them “fishers of men.”

Jesus is going to make them fishers of men.

After all, where does the church’s success, power, and blessing come from? It all comes from God doesn’t it?

John Calvin makes this point commenting on these verses as well: He wrote, “*God often tries believers, that he may lead them to more highly value his blessing. If we were always prosperous, whenever we put our hand to labour, scarcely any man would attribute to the blessing of God the success of his exertions, all would boast of their industry, and would kiss their hands.”*

Which is, of course, true isn’t it? Whenever things are going well, we quickly credit ourselves. We think that our work ethic, our industriousness, our strategic thinking, is the reason for our success.

But I’m sure you can all see the problem with this: God is missing. We begin to see ourselves as the source of all blessing and not the Lord.

It’s the equivalent of fishing for men in the dark without Jesus. It cannot be done!

Not only should we credit the Lord for all the blessings we experience particularly in the church, but we must also understand that it only comes by and through his power.

**2. Success through Christ (vv. 4-8)**

Success and blessing in the church is never independent from Jesus Christ. It always comes through him. It’s true for both the church and for us as individuals as well. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. We are totally dependent upon him.

Luke 5, Peter and other men were out fishing when Jesus called them to follow him. But before that happened Jesus told them to “go out into the deep and put out their nets.” He offers some unsolicited advice.

And Peter tells him, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!” But eventually they listened to Jesus, went out into the deep, and “...enclosed [such] a large number of fish, [that] their nets were breaking.”

Is any of that sounding familiar to you? They worked all night, caught nothing, then Jesus gave them advice and they pulled in an enormous catch of fish.

Look at verse 4 with me: We’re told that the “day was breaking.” The theme of light and darkness is at work. Of course, the light highlights the presence of the Lord.

Alone in the darkness, the disciples had failed. But now that Jesus was on the shore they were going to experience dramatic success. But initially, the disciples did not recognize him. We’re not told why they didn’t recognize them.

Here are these expert fishermen, having an unsuccessful fishing trip, when a man they don’t recognize starts yelling fishing tips at them from the shore. And his advice isn’t what you might call, advanced fishing techniques. He doesn’t tell them, you’re using the wrong type of net, or schools of fish congregate on that part of the lake, no his advice is, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”

They tossed the next onto the right side and John tells us in verse 6 “...they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.” It’s a miracle isn’t it?

Again, all of this is incredibly similar to Luke 5. Luke records in verse 6, “And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.”

And after that, Jesus told them, “...from now on you will be catching men.”

Interestingly enough, both Peter and John were fishing in the boat when Jesus called them in Luke 5. I wonder if at that point something clicked. I can help but think John had to think… wait a minute, I’ve been here before.

Because John says to Peter in verse 7, “It is the Lord.” It always seems like John figures things out before Peter, but Peter always acts before John.

Think about what’s being communicated here: Jesus is going to send out his disciples, his representatives for church, to preach the gospel, and their success would come not from their efforts or abilities. Their success would come through Jesus.

**3. The Provision of Christ (vv. 9-14)**

Jesus was going to take care of the results, but not only was Jesus going to take care of the results, he was going to take care of them. Is that what we see in verses 9-14?

Jesus provided for his disciples. They get to shore, and he’s already got breakfast cooking!

There are a lot of parallels between Jesus’ breakfast meal and John 6, where Jesus fed the five thousand. It was the exact same meal - fish and bread, and the language between the passages are similar. Jesus already had the fish and bread on the fire before any of the disciples got to shore, which has led many scholars to think that this may have been a miraculous meal as well.

Another interesting fact about this passage is John records the exact number of fish in verse 11: they caught 153 fish. Why would he go out of his way to mention it? It’s an incredibly specific detail isn’t it?

There’s been a lot of speculation over the 153 fish, there may be a connection to Ezekiel 47, or perhaps it’s a gematria, which has to do with the Hebraic practice of assigning numbers to letters, words, and phrases. I don’t think that anyone can speak definitively as to why this incredibly specific detail made it into Scripture other than to make sure you and I know they caught a lot of fish that morning.

But Jesus also washed his disciples’ feet, and of course, in this passage, he cooked them breakfast. I’m sure that’s a breakfast none of them ever forgot.

But again, if the chief concern of this text has to do with the ministry of the disciples and the future of the church, and Jesus is pressing a very simple point home to them.

He’s not going to abandon them. He’s going to be with them. Even after Jesus ascended into heaven, he didn’t leave them stranded. He’s giving them a glimpse of what he promised in Matthew 28: “ behold, I am with you to the end of the age.”

He’s going to be with them and provide for them every step of the way. Sort of like, fixing breakfast after a long night of fishing.

Hopefully you can see that the primary message of this particular text has very little to do with actually fishing. Rather, this passage has everything to do with Jesus sustaining and providing for the church.

That was true then, and it’s true for the church today. The church under the strength of her own power will always fail.

Far too often the church believes in order to ‘catch men,’ that is, see people get saved then the church must make concessions and become more accommodating.

Is that trusting that the Lord will provide or is it fishing by yourself in the dark? When we are weak then we are strong. When we are dependent upon the Lord, when we realize that, “[We do] not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” - that’s the strength of the church.

And the Lord is always going to take care of us. I hope we can all find peace in that wonderful truth this evening. Our lives are in his hands and so is the church, but where else would you rather be?