
John 21:1-14. Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. ⁶ He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Refreshed by the Details

1. Jesus gives his disciples proof that this is all true.
2. Jesus gives his followers joy in sharing the good news.

153. 153 fish were caught on that day. To the best of our knowledge this more than just a bit of trivia. However, there is no indication that this is a symbolic number as we sometimes see in the Bible. Instead by all accounts this number is included because of the simple joy of an eyewitness account. This is a man who recalls this particular fish story without exaggeration, but with pure delight and wonder. **153, but even with so many the net was not torn.** There is a refreshing beauty in the details given by this grateful eyewitness, including the exact number of fish caught that day. Jesus supplied his disciples with a memorable moment, and the disciples had a great story to tell that would refresh and invigorate them every time they told it. Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus had died and rose again. They had been given proof of the historic event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and they had been given joy to share. They saw him more than once. He was there among them and they had true life stories to tell that were full of memorable details.

I suppose that it's kind of like the guy you know who was at Game 6 of the 1991 World Series. He was there and he saw in person the catch that Kirby Puckett made as he perfectly timed his jump up against the Plexiglas to rob the Braves Ron Gant of an extra base hit. As he tells the story, that guy you know, laces his account with detail. Scott Ericson was pitching, it

was the third inning, and Ron Gant drove a long fly ball to left center, Kirby ranged over and jumped up about 10 feet to grab the ball before it hit that 13 foot Plexiglas that used to be a part of left field wall in the old Metrodome. That guy you know tells you the story with a smile and a twinkle in his eye, as he also remembers how the white Homer Hankies were waving in the bottom of the 11th inning as Kirby hit a home run over that same plexiglassed left field wall to end the game and send the Twins to a World Series clinching game 7. The happy story teller even recalls for you where the ball landed: Section 101, Row 5, Seat 27.

Some little detail sticks with you, it makes the story that much more interesting and exciting, and the joy that is found in those specific details reinvigorates and refreshes. 153 fish were caught. You can almost imagine John's lips curling into a smile, his head shaking, or he takes on some other expression of joy and wonder as he remembers this unforgettable occasion.

In fact, John's entire account of this third appearance that Jesus made to his disciples after his resurrection is chock-full of such delightful details. Even from the opening words he seems to state his intention to be detailed and thorough in his accounting. John writes,

Afterward Jesus

appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: "It happened this way" he writes. He was there. This was all true and so he lists the location. He lists those who were there. And as he writes he even includes what seems to a rather benign conversation. ³ ***"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you."*** With careful fondness the details are listed. The scene is set, the one telling this true life story, draws us in with the details and lets us know that this is the way it happened. This group of fisherman led by Peter went out and that caught no fish that night. No doubt, they tried everything. But the night soon would turn into day and there was nothing. Not a single fish. But a forgettable night was about to turn into an unforgettable morning. A man cried out to them in the dim of the morning light. ***"Friends, haven't you any fish?"*** They didn't know it was Jesus so all they gave as a response was ***"No"***. Jesus would then call out to them some simple directions that bring about a miraculous event. ***"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."*** ***When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*** It was an incredible miracle, the likes of which these disciples had seen so many times before. As the group struggled with the nets one disciple quickly put two and two together before the rest. This was Jesus. And as John using that title of grateful affection once more writes himself into the story. ⁷ ***Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"*** The title, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was not an indication that Jesus showed any favoritism, but this was simply John's way of writing himself into the narrative. This was John's way of recognizing how blessed he was to be an eyewitness to this incredible story of the Savior. John himself saw all of this. John himself got to say those words that thrust Peter into frenzied action. ***As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.***

John included all the happy details. Peter wrapped that outer garment around himself, jumped into the water. The other disciples were left to tow the net of fish into shore in John's estimation. When they landed there was the fire of burning coals, with fish, and bread, and there was Jesus, their risen Lord and Savior then invited them to breakfast. ¹⁴ ***This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.***

John was there, he and Peter and the rest had seen it with their own eyes. Jesus had been raised from the dead. And therefore all that he said was true. This miraculous catch, all the miracles before, and certainly the resurrection from the dead proved that Jesus was truly the Son of God. This proved that all that he had said and promised were true. And with gladness of heart he gave his detailed description of these wonderful truths. This was not a clever bit of fiction; this was historical fact, filled with joyous bits of details that John fondly recorded.

This was for his benefit and for the benefit of those who would hear this good news. It was no doubt a joy to recall and share this message and that joy is still passed down to us as well. This is true and this all happened for you. Jesus rose from the dead and his friends saw him and told their eyewitness accounts so that we may believe and be saved eternally.

I suppose we forget about that at times. We fall into thinking like the skeptical world around us and we may think that this is no more than an interesting collection of fiction. Or even if we don't fall into such denial of God's truth in our sinfulness we fail to grasp the excitement behind all of this. We see the Bible as boring, out of touch, and irrelevant to our modern day. Dear friends, the Bible is a lot of things. It is God's Word of Truth. It is the power of salvation. It is a lamp to our feet, a light for our path. It is living and active. The Bible is a lot of things, but one thing it is not, it is not boring. This is the message of salvation. This is the history of God's plan of salvation. These are the eyewitness accounts of Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world and rose again to assure sinners of forgiveness and eternal life. These beautiful words that God gave to John as he records for us this encounter with the risen LORD are written to snap us out of the sinful sluggishness that we often settle into. These words are written to refresh our faith so that we may charge joyfully to meet with Jesus over breakfast or dinner or break time or during our bedtime routine as we make him a part of our day, part of our life. My Savior comes to me in his word of truth, your Savior invites you to read and learn from his marvelous word, our Savior is revealed to us so that we may thankfully spend time with him and know that the Son of God came to save us. And now through the Spirit of God working through that Word we get to share that good news of salvation with a believer's joy and confidence. With the same type of excitement that use to tell our favorite stories, or fish stories, or how we recall with such detail the book that we read or the game that we saw we may speak of our LORD and Savior and the great things that he has done for me and for so many others.

We can tell these remarkable stories with delightful details. No we were not on the boat that day with Peter and John and the rest of the disciples, but we have their eyewitness accounts that leap off the page and into our hearts. And as we learn them and learn to love these true stories, these eyewitness accounts may begin to leap from our lips as well. We can

share the good news with joy in our hearts for we too are loved by Christ, we too are witnesses of his goodness. We can speak to our family and our friends about that favorite Bible story that has captured our attention this week. We can mine the Scriptures in Bible study and home devotions and share with great joy this new insight that was shared with us by a pastor or a devotion writer. We can uncover details of God's Word that we were able to revisit and now that our situation in life has changed we appreciate that particular point or emphasis even more. This word of encouragement brought of joy. These words of promise brought us comfort.

And as we consider the powerful words of God, as we share the good news of Jesus all this is seasoned by our personal experience as well. Our personal testimony and witness is shaped by how God's Word has touch our lives. I am a part of all this. Jesus had me in mind when he died for the sins of the world. Jesus appeared to his disciples to give me the same kind of assurance and joy that he gave to them. And this is the same God now who comes to me and is a part of my life. Perhaps you can recall with delightful detail the prayer that was answered, the comfort that was received as you read this passage, or heard the pastor speak these words. You can think back and recall with fondness the catechism question that you answered years ago and the Bible verse that was given to you on your confirmation day. That all still rattles about in your mind as blessed details and happy memories. A line from a recent - or sometimes a not so recent - sermon sticks with you. A stanza from the hymn that was exactly what you needed. A detail that you had never really considered, just hit you on that day. Daily we are refreshed by the details of God's Word. Daily we are renewed as we recall that you and I are one of many disciples whom Jesus loves. Those personal touches refresh and restore and reinvigorate our faith, and also shapes how we share this good news with detail and personal joy.

Allow me to wrap things up by considering one more of the details that John gives. The fire. On the night that Jesus was betrayed, very likely in the early hours of that Friday morning that Jesus died, Peter had stood by a fire and denied his Lord. Now his LORD invited him to come near as a fire burned and warmed the morning air. This time Peter rushed to his Savior's side. And soon Jesus would restore him, forgive him, and reinstate him. Sin would be confronted, but grace and forgiveness would be poured upon this servant of Christ. As we come before him today the Lord treats us with similar grace. Sin is confronted and confessed and the Lord forgives and restores and reinvigorates his servants. Specific sins are confessed. Perhaps you have denied your Lord by things that you have done or said. Perhaps you have failed to live your faith when it has been tested. Perhaps you have been lazy in our spiritual life. Your Savior comes to you. Through his word he speaks specific gospel. Your sin, that particular sin is forgiven. Your Savior lives and you will live with him forever in the joys of heaven. Your sluggish faith is given a boost from the living LORD and his word of truth. He lives. Death has been defeated. Heaven is open to you. And one day you will be rushed to your Savior's side as you join in the feast of victory that will last for all eternity. May this good news of the gospel daily strike and warm our hearts so that we may be refreshed and renewed to live for God and to share this good news with delightful detail and grateful joy. Amen.