

Eternity Daily Bible Study – No. 337
Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21
Date: Monday 27th September 2004
Verses: John 21:1-6
Topic: The Big Catch – Part 1

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1 After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: 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 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately^[1] got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

Today's passage extends from verse 1 to 14 so we will break it into two natural halves and just do verses 1 to 6 today.

A group of seven disciples go fishing among them "Nathanael of Cana in Galilee" – perhaps it was Nathanael's wedding they all attended in John chapter 2! Four are missing, but Thomas is back with them.

At Peter's behest they went fishing and "that night they caught nothing". I once spent a few weeks in a Papua New Guinean fishing village about two hours from Port Moresby – and there they also fished at night, not during the day. The produce was then brought in to market in the morning, sold, then later in the day the nets were prepared and the whole thing began again. There was almost no time for sleep.

"They caught nothing" - Every time I have tried to augment my ministry income with a business sideline I have "caught nothing". God wants me in the ministry and He won't let me stray! Peter and Co were going fishing to earn a bit of pocket money and get the old business back again. There is archaeological evidence of a major "Sons of Zebedee" fishing business on Lake Galilee but whether it was the actual disciples business has not been proved.

Jesus had just told them "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" but it evidently had not sunk in. They were going back to business and needed to be taught a lesson. Peter was still full of shame (see verses 7-14) and was hanging back and everyone else was also hanging back with Peter their leader. Jesus needed to close off the fishing possibility with finality, recommission Peter, and then get the disciples back over their doubts and back into action.

So Jesus meets them in their tired, hungry, exhausted state after the fishing trip. He asks the question that He knows will annoy any fisherman "have you caught anything" and He asks it as "have you any food". Seven grumpy disciples answer Him curtly "No". Jesus, probably grinning from ear to ear, says "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." – they obey, and catch a huge quantity of fish.

This triggers Peter's response which we will look at tomorrow. Today lets look at the obvious – God's blessing brings more results in an instant than human effort can ever accomplish on its own.

Joseph worked hard to get promoted and just ended up in jail, but in a moment was made Prime Minister of Egypt.

The woman with the hemorrhage spent all her money on doctors – and was healed in an instant.

Esther went from an unknown Jewish girl to becoming Queen in a single day.

Daniel went from an obscure Jewish lad to Nebuchadnezzar's right hand man in an afternoon because he interpreted a dream.

Unblessed human effort goes nowhere –even if it is well-intended and "on the right track". Moses could not free the Israelites until he relied totally on God.

This is not to say that we should sit in an armchair and wait for God to do it all. The shoemaker's elves (that built the shoes at night while the shoemaker slept) are not part of biblical lore! The disciples did end up working – and working hard as they pulled the net to shore. But they worked after God, and with God, not instead of God.

God created the Universe from "a handful of nothing" and He can create amazing things in our life as well. Acts 3:12 is Peter's summary about human efficacy: So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

The miraculous has nothing to do with our own power or piety but it does involve us. If Peter and John had remained silent and not said "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" the miracle would never have occurred. And if the disciples had not thrown their net on the right side of the boat – they would have not caught the fish.

What is the secret to a Big catch in ministry? First, listen to God! Obey His directions not your own calculations. Secondly catch His nets when and where He says. Thirdly – use all your might to pull them in! Follow-up is ninety percent of the effort of evangelism. Lazy ministers of the gospel leave all the fish in the net. Use your technology, your web site, your radio program or your tracts – but after God as spoken and only at His direction.

Blessings,

John

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