

The Miracles of Jesus
Miracle # 33

"The Miraculous Haul of Fish- An Encounter with The Risen Lord"
John 21:1-22

In Matthew 28:7 the resurrected Lord had promised that he would meet up with the disciples in **Galilee**. They went to Galilee and waited and waited and waited. When some days had passed and still Jesus had not shown up the disciples, primarily Peter became impatient. Peter, disappointed in the delay, announced that he was going fishing. Now there is nothing innately wrong with him going fishing, but some believe that the problem is that this is a sign that they were drifting away from the calling of God upon their lives.

After the trauma of the crucifixion and the turmoil of the resurrection, Peter and the other disciples were discouraged and now having waited for the Lord to appear they were impatient. Perhaps, they began to look back on the good old days of their lives before things became so complicated and frankly who can blame them. The days when there was a daily routine that could be counted on, were there was security of knowing what was next and the satisfaction of running their own lives. In John 21, we read that seven of the disciples have gathered at Peter's home in Capernaum waiting for Jesus.

The Background of the Miracle (vv. 1-3)

"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 got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing."

Peter impatient as always declares in verse three, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also."

In verse three when Peter said, "I go fishing." The Greek word used to convey what Peter said was (**hupago** -hoop-ag'-o), this is an interesting word that literally means "**I retire.**" Peter is ready to quit preaching and go back to what he knew best, fishing. And either Peter was very persuasive or the other disciples were as disgusted as he was, for seven of the eleven went with him and three of those were not even fisherman. They said.

"Hey, we will go with you"

Peter was looking back, he tried to go back to his comfort zone. He began to think, **"Hey if this ministry thing doesn't work out I can always go back to where I left off."**

"They caught Nothing"

The second part of verse three says, "They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing." What Peter discovered is very important; he discovered that you can't go **back**. Let me try to put this as eloquently as possible, **"There ain't nothing more depressing than catching nothing."** In fact he showed Peter that without him he could not even fish anymore. It wasn't until the Lord showed up to give them specific instructions on fishing that these former "professional" fishermen got so much as a bite.

The Elements of the Miracle (vv. 4-6)

"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."

When the morning broke, the disciples saw someone stand on the shore. The figure called to them and asked if they had caught anything. They replied, that they had not. The man then told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. When the fisherman obeyed they caught a school of fish so large that the net could not be pulled into the boat.

This is the second miraculous catch of fish reported in the Gospels. The first was associated with the **calling** of the disciples (Lk 5:1-14) it is fitting that this extraordinary catch is associated with what we might call the recommissioning of Peter.

The Effect of the Miracle (vv. 7-22)

- Peter **Believes** (v. 7)

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea."

Peter first met Jesus while engaged in his occupation as fisherman, so as John relates here, Peter's last earthly contact with Jesus was in a fishing context.

John was the visionary, often the first to see and understand, Peter was a doer always a man of action. At this point John said to Peter, "**Peter, It is the Lord!**" Peter was so eager to see the Lord that he literally leaped into the water and **swam** to the shore.

- Jesus Is **Revealed** (vv. 8-14)

"But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. (9) Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. (10) Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." (11) Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. (12) Jesus said to them, "Come and eat break-fast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"-- knowing that it was the Lord. (13) Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. (14) This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead."

Before the disciples had a chance to bring their catch to shore, Jesus had already prepared fish for them to eat – fish that they had not caught but Jesus had obtained and prepared for his disciples.

The meal that Jesus served His disciples was important because it was a visual reminder of the promise that could and would provide all their **needs** as they carried out their mission.

The net was pulled on shore and the fish were counted. Some commentators see significance in the number of fish caught in this miracle, **153**. They say that was the number of **species** of fish found in the Sea of Galilee and that through the ministry of the disciples some of every known **race** would be gathered into the Church.

- Peter Is **Restored** (vv. 15-22)

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter"

After the shared meal on the shore, Jesus Asks Peter a series of three questions concerning his love for Him.

First Question (v. 15)

The Lord's Question

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (**agape**) Me more than these?"

The Greek language in which the New Testament was written, unlike English has more than one word for the expression of love. When Jesus says to Simon do you love me He said literally, "**Simon Peter do agape me?**"

Agape is the **God** kind of Love? It is the word used to translate John 3:16 which says, "for God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son."

Jesus asked, "Simon Peter do you love me more than these?" More than what? There are several possibilities; Peter do loved me more than you do **fishing**, Simon Peter do you love me more than you do these **disciples**, Simon Peter do you love me **more** than these other disciples do?

Peter's Reply

"Yes, Lord; You know that I love (**phileo**) You."

Fresh in Peter's memory was his denial of the Lord after having previously boasting that even if all the other disciples abandoned Jesus he would not (Matt 26:33). Peter after his failure is not willing to step up and say that he has the same kind (**degree**) of love for the Lord and the Lord does for him, instead he says, "Lord you know I have a **deep affection** for you."

The Lord's Command

He said to him, "Feed (provide nutriment for) lambs!"

The LORD tells Peter that it will be his responsibility to **feed** the sheep.

Second Question (v. 16)

The Lord's Question

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (**agape**) Me?"

The Lord again asked Peter "**Peter do you love me, with the same intensity that I love you?**"

Peter's Reply

"Yes, Lord; You know that I love (**phileo**) You."

Peter ever aware of his past failure was still not able to boast that he loved the Lord with same kind of sacrificial love that the LORD loved him.

The Lord's Command

"Tend (*shepherd*) My sheep."

Here the Lord points out Peter's responsibility to **shepherd** the flock.

The Third Question (v. 17)

The Lord's Question

"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (**phileo**) Me?"

In his third question the LORD stepped down to Peter level and asked, "**Ok, Peter do you really have a deep and abiding affection for me?**"

Peter's Reply

"Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (*phileo*) You."

In my opinion Peter said, "**LORD you know far better than I how much I love you.**"

The Lord's Command

"Feed (provide food for) My sheep.

Peter had in effect said, "**Lord I realize that nothing I could ever do would measure up to the way you love me, but I am not going to quit.**" Peter came out of retirement and Jesus declared him fit for the ministry because he did not quit.

Peter apparently understood what the Lord was trying to tell him for he wrote many years later in 1 Peter 5:1-4, "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: (2) Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; (3) nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; (4) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

In verse eighteen Jesus tells Peter what the future will hold for him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." (19) This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

The truth is that when we compare ourselves with others we either get the **big head** or we get **hacked off**. Have you ever stopped to consider the dynamics of the relationship between Peter and John and Jesus. Peter was to be the Lord's choice to be the **leader** of the disciples, but John was the disciple whom we are told in verse twenty that "**Jesus loved.**"

Peter's reply to these words of comfort, was to turn and look at John ask in verse twenty-one, "**But Lord, what about this man?**"

In effect Peter says, "**But what about John?**" Jesus rebuke is very sharp in verse twenty-two, "...If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" He said, "**Peter that is none of your business.**"

Peter was guilty of playing the "**comparison**" game. We are still tempted today to turn and ask "***But what about them?***" Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "**For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.**" Have you ever been guilty of comparing yourself to some other believer? I suspect that we all have.

Jesus made the whole matter quite clear to Peter. He said, "***Peter, I have told you my plans for your life, what I choose to do with John is none of your business. Peter you have enough to be concerned about in yourself,***" and so do we.

"Follow Me"

Jesus' final words to Peter in verse twenty-two, are "**Follow Me.**" The verb tense here is present tense which means "***keep on following.***" With those words Jesus reinstates Peter as his disciple. Peter was called as in the beginning, to once again follow Jesus and continue following until the end.