

Trusting Jesus

John 21:1-14

Introduction

When we read this story, there are many things that stick out to us, many questions. Why were seven of the disciples in Galilee? Why did they go fishing? Why would experienced fishermen listen to advice from a stranger on shore (since they didn't appear to recognize Jesus at first)? Why does John say this is the third time Jesus was revealed to the disciples when he made five appearances on the first day? As to that last question, this is only the third time that Jesus has revealed Himself to the disciples as a group: once on Resurrection Day in the upper room without Thomas, the second time a week later, with Thomas present, and this is the third time, to a group of seven who were fishing in Galilee. To get a better understanding of this story, we are going to look at it in light of the first miraculous catch of fish in **Luke 5**. (Read **Luke 5:1-11**).

Called/Sent

The first catch takes place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when He is calling His disciples. This one is after His resurrection, as He is preparing to send them out and carry on the ministry. He is fulfilling what He promised them when He called them, to make them fishers of men. They have followed Him in His ministry. Now, His ministry on earth was over, and it was their time to be witnesses of the crucified, risen Christ and spread the Gospel. In the same way, He has called His church to come together around the Word and Sacrament and learn from Him, then sends us out into the world to share that Word with others. Our mission is to spread the Gospel to the world around us so others can believe and live.

In Galilee

Why did these men go to Galilee? The five who are mentioned are from Galilee. It's safe to assume that the two unnamed ones are, too. They are likely Andrew, Peter's brother, and Philip, the one who went and found Nathanael. A more obvious answer to that question is that Jesus told them to go to Galilee. In **Matthew 28**, when the women are leaving the tomb after finding an angel, Jesus met them on the way out of the garden (read **Matthew 28:10**). They were only doing what Jesus wanted them to do. While waiting, they just did what came naturally, they went fishing. It's always a good thing to follow directions given by Jesus.

The Caught Nothing

Jesus didn't send them there to go fishing and they caught nothing. God has a job for us, but if we try to do it without His Word, our efforts will be fruitless.

They Trust Jesus

They don't seem to recognize who Jesus is, yet they do what He says without question. Are these experienced fishermen taking advice from a stranger on the shore? Or are they having déjà vu? Three years ago, Jesus, whom they had just met, told them to do something crazy and it worked. He told them, late in the morning, to put out into the deep to catch fish. Everyone knows that the best fishing

on Galilee is at night and in shallow water. Now, He says, *“Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find [fish]” (John 21:6)*. What difference does the side make? The right is the side of blessing. In **Matthew 25**, at the judgment, Jesus puts the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. These “fish” become “sheep” for the kingdom. So, the disciples go ahead and do what He said. That’s a good example for us. When God’s directions are clear, even if they don’t make sense, do what He says.

A Large Catch

For when they did, they had such a large catch they couldn’t get them into the boat. At the word of Jesus everything changes. We will have success in our ministry when we are faithful to Jesus and take Him at His word. Of course, we must remember not to measure success the way the world does. Success for us is doing God’s will in faith and trusting Him for results.

The Net Didn’t Tear

Even with 153 large fish, the net didn’t tear. A lot of theories have been proposed by the church fathers and others about the possible symbolism of “153”. But that’s not a symbolic number like 7, 10, or 40. It’s best to see it as a concrete number. After all, sometimes a number is just a number, and the simplest interpretation is the best. John includes that specific number to show that the event really happened, that he was there, and they counted the fish. The amazing thing is the net didn’t tear. When we are faithful to Jesus in completing a mission that He has given, He will see that we aren’t overwhelmed, that it doesn’t get too big for us, and that we will have the resources to do it. The reason people get burned out is that they try to do God’s will on their own power.

Recognition/Revelation

In the miracle of the catch of fish, the disciples recognize Jesus. It seems that people couldn’t recognize the risen Christ unless He wanted them to. Remember the two on the road to Emmaus and how they didn’t recognize Jesus until He began to break the bread at supper (**Luke 24:30-31**). The disciples now made the connection with the first miraculous catch. In the first catch, Jesus was calling them to be His followers; in the second catch, He was sending them out as His witnesses. How do we recognize Jesus today? He has given us the gifts of Word and Sacrament in which to recognize Him, and the Holy Spirit who gives us the faith to see. The Spirit opens our ears to be able to hear Jesus in His Word. And through the faith given by the Spirit, we see and receive His body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. Hear Him and receive the crucified, risen Christ today and become a fisher of men for Jesus.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
