

## **John #56: Jesus Revealed (John 21:1-14)**

### **PRAY**

It's wedding season again around these parts... I've been to two in the last 8 days  
It's always fun sensing the nerves a young bride and groom have on their wedding day  
The butterflies are real... They're giddy, excited, scared, hyperventilating  
They've also meticulously planned out many details for months,  
and thus are anxious that everything goes well  
One of the things I've often said to couples to help calm their nerves is that  
As long as the right girl walks down the aisle,  
And as long as the right guy is standing at the end of it,  
And in the end, you walk out married, that's all that really matters  
In other words, the identity of the other person—who they are—is of prime importance  
If the one you truly love is the one you get, the one you have, you're good

In a similar way, the identity of Jesus—who he is—matters so much more than we ever imagine  
One of the main reasons the gospels have been written in our Bibles is to tell us who Jesus is  
And the gospel according to John, as we've seen recently, is no different: **READ 20:31**<sup>1</sup>  
But we might wonder, as I'm sure Jesus' disciples wondered: Will things change after he's gone?  
Of course, we believe that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever... And yet...  
The resurrected Christ appeared different than he did before he died  
So now that he is risen, glorified, and ascended what is Jesus like?  
How would he treat his lowly disciples now? How will he relate to us today?  
In today's passage in John, it's like Jesus says: "I want you to know this is who I am now."  
"Same as I have always been, except even better... This is who I will always be to my people"  
And no matter what goes wrong in life, if we have the right Jesus with us now, watching  
over us, and waiting for us in the end, we'll be good... That's all that really matters

Please **TURN** with me, if you haven't already, to John chapter 21... John 21 [page #907]  
The story we'll read is basically a "living parable" of how the Lord relates to his people  
Even while he is risen and reigning, and we're still down here toiling on earth<sup>2</sup>

Right before this final chapter, we had the clear climax of John, in Jesus' death and resurrection  
After rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to the whole group of his disciples—twice  
The first time, he commissioned them to be sent out to spread the good news  
The second time, he convinced Thomas to believe, who made his great confession  
Finally, John concluded that while Jesus did many signs, he recorded these so we'd believe  
It makes for a wonderful conclusion to the book... Except that it's not quite done yet!  
It can seem anticlimactic to keep going: Jesus is alive! 'My Lord and my God!' Believe!  
And now: Fishing... Swimming... And breakfast...  
But this epilogue of chapter 21 plays an important part in the story,  
Tying up loose ends, and pointing ahead to what would happen next  
Because the story of Christ doesn't end at his ascension, after all  
Jesus came to give us who believe *life* in his name...  
John 21 shows what continued life in his name looks like, while we remain in the world

And so, we go on: **READ v.1<sup>3</sup>**... This passage is really all about Jesus' self-revelation  
He'd revealed himself and his Father throughout his time on earth  
But now things were different after his resurrection... So he reveals himself again  
He shows, again, that he's truly risen and alive... And so much more while he's at it  
So, John says that he's reporting on a revelation—an unveiling, a visible manifestation

The scene now shifts from Jerusalem up to the Sea of Tiberias, or the Sea of Galilee in the north:  
**READ v.1-3<sup>4</sup>**... So seven of the guys are hanging out, back in their home region

Nathanael and Thomas both appeared at key places in John—and Peter throughout it  
So that's probably why they in particular got named here  
Now, no one really knows whether Peter's fishing trip was right or wrong to do  
Whether it shows them abandoning their mission and returning to their old lives and jobs  
Or whether this was more just them using their time productively and not remaining idle  
After all, Jesus might've been risen, but they still needed to eat!  
Besides, the angels had told them to head to Galilee, where they would see Jesus  
Either way, the story doesn't sound like men on a Holy Spirit-empowered mission  
And it's really hard to imagine this scene happening in Acts, after Pentecost<sup>5</sup>  
But: Apart from Christ, they can do nothing... So it's poetic that that night, they caught nothing

[tr] But then Jesus appears! And their fortunes change immediately: **READ v.4-6<sup>6</sup>**... Wow!  
So, if this is Jesus' post-resurrection revelation of himself, what does this reveal about him?  
It might sound mundane, but it's actually mighty... Might in the midst of the mundane:

### **Jesus reveals himself in powerful help (v.1-6)**

[r] Jesus' followers needed help—and don't we ever still need help today... Christ gives it  
[r] Jesus reveals himself in powerful help

Right as a new day dawns, Jesus shows up (Coincidence?)... With the light, comes revelation  
But just as it happened in chapter 20, his disciples don't recognize him right away  
'Who's the stranger watching us from the shore?'  
If it hadn't happened before, I'd chalk that up to him just being too far away to recognize  
But this was becoming a pattern... They didn't recognize Jesus in his resurrected body

**READ v.5a<sup>7</sup>**... Essentially like saying 'Friends' or 'Lads'... Why'd he call them this?  
Maybe because: "*To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*"<sup>8</sup>... We're all kids to Jesus

**READ v.5b<sup>9</sup>**... The grammar here expects a negative answer: 'You don't have any fish, do you?'

**READ v.5c<sup>10</sup>**... What a depressing failure of a night! Imagine how they felt...

'Man, I just wanted to have a nice night with my boys... Catch a few fish... But no  
All the work of getting our boat out here... All the lost sleep... For nothing!'  
Fun fact: We have to take it on faith that Peter was actually a good fisherman... It was his work  
But in the Bible, there's actually no account of Peter ever catching anything without Jesus<sup>11</sup>

But now Jesus is there, and he catches a literal boatload of fish: **READ v.6<sup>12</sup>**

Now, why did they follow Jesus' advice, if they didn't know it was him yet? Who knows!  
In your field of expertise, do you like getting unsolicited advice from a stranger?

No, definitely not... Especially when things aren't going well!  
You're a nurse... And someone wanders into your patient's room:  
    'Hey, why don't you give this guy some of that drug... I think he'll perk up.'  
Or you're a teacher... And someone pokes their head into your classroom:  
    'You know, your kids' grades will improve if you make them read this book'  
Or maybe worst, you're a parent... Another parent at the playground points to your kids  
    and tells you how you should be parenting or raising them  
We take exception to these kinds of situations: 'Don't tell me how to do my job!'  
    I wouldn't know, but I'm told that people who go fishing are used to getting nosy advice:  
    'Try casting over there... The fish are always biting there.'  
Jesus' advice sounded crazy: 'The fish aren't biting here, but you say they're biting here... Right'  
Maybe the disciples rolled their eyes and tried to show this rando up: 'Just watch; you'll see'  
Or maybe they had given up hope at this point, so they thought: 'What can it hurt?'  
Or maybe this triggered a memory of Jesus giving them a miraculous catch on another occasion  
    And so they thought: 'Huh. ...Let's give it a shot.'

The fact is: Jesus *had* done similar before... The story is recorded in Luke 5  
    But the contrast between the two miraculous catches is important  
    The first time, Jesus was in the boat with them... They knew it was him from the start  
    Also, the catch was enormous, but they were able to pull the nets into the boat  
    And while Peter features prominently in both events, his reactions are very different  
        The first time, when he's still getting to know Jesus, and Jesus does this,  
        Peter gets spooked... He goes, 'Jesus, you gotta get out of here...  
        I'm too sinful of a man to be around someone like you.' (Remember that)

But whatever was going through the disciples' heads, they decide to take the advice  
    And when they do, all of a sudden, they're bombarded by more fish than they can handle  
Did Jesus just know where the fish were, and guided the boat to precisely the right spot?  
    Or did he guide the fish to the disciples? Rounding them up, unseen, beneath the surface  
Whatever the case, it's a miracle... One more supernatural sign for the book of John  
    Jesus has control over his creation... Even the winds and the waves and the *fish* obey him!

So... Jesus is risen... But he's still working wonders... He's still blessing his disciples...  
    He's still showing them grace, regardless of them deserving it  
And gratuitous grace at that—way above and beyond what they needed  
    In fact, as we'll see, they didn't even need any fish at all right then  
    Jesus already had some fish on the shore for them... But he blesses anyway  
He has some fun... I picture Jesus chuckling on the shore as they vainly strained at the nets

Now, think: Why didn't Jesus just give them a personal record of a night of fishing?  
    Why keep the fish from being caught all night, in order to have them all caught now?  
It seems he wanted his disciples to have a moment of powerful encounter with him  
    He wanted them to realize he did this, not them... It wasn't just a lucky night  
    So he shows off... He had the power to help his people... He deserved the glory  
We may be confused or downcast today—over our failings, or our suffering, or our waiting  
    We wonder why God would withhold success from us, in whatever area of life:

Failing in school, at work, in relationships, in living a godly life  
Or we grow tired of waiting for God to act in the way we want him to  
I'm not going to promise you the equivalent of a maritime miracle in your life  
But could it be possible that Jesus is biding his time, for an encounter with us?  
There may be a day we'll powerfully experience his help, and praise him for it

Jesus reveals himself in the way he powerfully helps his people... And this happens to this day  
We can sing along with David in **Psalm 28:7**: "*The LORD is my strength and my shield; in  
him my heart trusts, and I am helped...*"

Or in **Psalm 124:8**: "*Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*"

This powerful help of the Lord is why we pray

As **Hebrews 4:16** tells us, because Jesus is now acting as our Great High Priest in heaven:  
"*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy  
and find grace to (\_\_\_?) help in time of need.*"

He helped his disciples catch a huge net of fish one morning on the Sea of Galilee

Now that we, like them, have become fishers of men,

Do we really think he won't help us with a task that is so much closer to his heart?

Whatever our need for help, we can come to him, and trust that he hears us

And believe that he is able to powerfully help, far beyond what we can ask or imagine

[tr] So we're already seeing that Jesus' presence on the scene changes everything

They weren't finding food... With Jesus, they find food... But not only that!

Jesus prepares food for them, welcoming them to join him for breakfast... So we'll see:

### **Jesus reveals himself in merciful welcome (v.7-8)**

[r] Jesus mercifully welcomes his followers to his side... So he's glorified, but he's accessible

[r] The risen Christ reveals himself in merciful welcome

It may not have taken genius-level IQ, but something about hordes of fish flooding their nets  
tipped John off about who this stranger on the shore was... He gasps: **READ v.7a**<sup>13</sup>

As was his custom, John keeps identifying himself by 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'

Jesus' identity and love completely shaped his identity... Do you this love of Christ for you?

If you know who he is, you know that he is merciful to sinful people... He died for them!

And you know how welcoming he is to the lost and needy and humble—like you

This is how he revealed himself... And I hope it's how you've experienced him in your own life

Just as it was at the empty tomb, John's the first to see, but Peter's the first to act: **READ v.7**<sup>14</sup>

Classic Peter-style... He was always jumping in with both feet—this time very literally

So John goes: 'It's the Lord!'... And Peter clues in: 'It totally is... Woah, I need to get dressed!'

And then he's like, 'Good luck with the fish, guys... I've got to get to Jesus!'

**SPLASH!** ...Like, his two thoughts were perfectly reasonable on their own—

Needing to get dressed and needing to get to Jesus—

But together, it makes for a hilarious picture of a guy who just got fully dressed

diving in the sea, and trying to swim, in his robes, to shore... As fast as he can go!

At least he doesn't try to walk on water now... That didn't turn out great last time

He hurls himself into the sea, like a better Jonah, heading *for* the Lord, not away

R.C. Sproul observes that Peter's urge to cover himself echoes the Garden of Eden:

*"After Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to cover their nakedness because of their shame under the guise of the holy God. Now Peter was going to face the Saviour he had denied and betrayed, so he covered himself and plunged into the water."*

Now remember how Peter had reacted the last time Jesus gave him a mountain of fish

Our instinct, when we encounter true holy power, like the power of Christ,  
is to put as much space between him and ourselves as possible

Peter asked Jesus to leave the boat because he was sinful and Jesus was clearly holy

But now, Peter leaves the boat in order to *get to* Jesus... He's desperate *for* Jesus

Even though he had so much more to be ashamed of now than before!

So you see how Peter has changed over time with Jesus? Jesus was just as holy and powerful

But now Peter knows that Jesus' holiness isn't something to cower *from*

It's something to flee *to*, because that's where mercy can be found to purify us:

In a holy, merciful Saviour who died and rose... This is a God who beckons us to come

Jesus clearly meant for them to come join him... He remained on shore, waiting to welcome them  
We can only imagine him greeting a dripping-wet Peter there...

John doesn't describe it... I guess he was still kind of occupied trying to haul in the fish

But can you picture Peter, splashing and stumbling out of the water, then running over to Jesus?

Did Jesus embrace him? Did he hand him a cloth for a towel? Did Peter weep?

What a tender, merciful moment that must've taken place between the lines here

v.8 continues: **READ v.8<sup>15</sup>**... They decided: 'We can't lift it, but we can row it to shore'

So they come, towing this massive net of the Lord's blessing behind them

And, as we'll see, Jesus was waiting to welcome them as well, in his tender mercy

Listen up kids: People will try to tell you what the most important things to pursue in life are

Some will say what matters most is getting a good education or a dream job

Some will say that you need to pursue wealth or financial security above all else

Some will tell you that romantic love or physical fitness is your greatest need

And still others will try to convince you that nothing matters more than family

But they're all wrong... Even if some of these things are good or valuable

And even if it's your parents, teachers, or best friends telling you this, they're wrong

What you need most in life, more than anything or anyone else, is peace with God

And therefore, what you need to pursue more than anything else is the Lord Jesus

Because it's at his side where we find true peace with God

He mercifully welcomes us there... And then continually bids us to draw near

Lord, make us desperate for you! As A.W. Tozer says: *"We ought to be fully surrendered to Jesus without restrictions or hesitation. Sink or swim, live or die, we ought to be irrevocably attached in love, faith, and devotion to Jesus Christ the Lord."*

[tr] In this story, we really see Jesus revealing himself *as the Lord*

He is the Lord of creation... Who powerfully comes to our help

He is the Lord of invitation... Who mercifully welcomes us to himself

And finally, we will see he is the Lord of provision... Who cares for all our needs... So:

**Jesus reveals himself in caring provision (v.9-14)**

[r] He cares for his disciples, providing things as lowly as breakfast, even post-resurrection  
[r] Jesus reveals himself in caring provision

**READ v.9a<sup>16</sup>**... Why the highly-specific detail about a ‘charcoal’ fire, do you think?

Well, can you think of another time in John that a charcoal fire is mentioned?

In fact, it’s the only other time ‘charcoal’ is mentioned in the entire New Testament!

3 chapters before this, in John 18:18, right in the middle of Peter’s denials,

It says how he and the people around were warming themselves at a charcoal fire

So now, Jesus welcomes Peter to another charcoal fire, where he can warm up and dry off

Just imagine the vivid memories flashing through Peter’s mind as he stared at the flames!

But Jesus wasn’t rubbing Peter’s failure in his face... He was just about to restore him!

Peter’s greatest sin happened around a fire... So would the greatest grace he’d ever know

That’s next week... But for now, just put yourself there, in the disciples’ shoes

Most of us love sitting around a fire, mesmerized by the flames and coals... So picture it

It’s a really beautiful and serenely powerful scene

Jesus is very real here... Jesus is very physical... Jesus is very much alive

And he’s gracious, merciful, welcoming, forgiving... And they all come to him<sup>17</sup>

And notice what I mentioned earlier: He already had food ready for them: **READ v.9<sup>18</sup>**

So they didn’t actually need all the fish he provided... It was gratuitous, extravagant grace

Even though he didn’t need them, Jesus welcomed their contribution to the meal: **READ v.10<sup>19</sup>**

And then catch what Peter did, jumping to obey, like: ‘Whatever you say, Lord’: **READ v.11a<sup>20</sup>**

Wait... Single-handedly? The 7 of them couldn’t haul it onboard together

Now Peter goes and back aboard and hauls it ashore by himself?

I don’t know, maybe he just led the way and the others helped

But the effect we’re left with is that after Peter was welcomed by Jesus,

He was then strengthened to do what he could not do before, maybe even miraculously

But whether or not *that* was miraculous, John seems to suggest *this* was: **READ v.11b<sup>21</sup>**

Their nets weren’t made to hold 153 large fish without breaking... Jesus preserved their nets

Now, why 153, you might ask? Since numbers are often symbolic in Scripture

People have suggested a ton of weird and wild theories over the years... For example:

153 is the triangular number of 17... 17 is 10 + 7... There are 10 commandments...

7 is the number of completion... It’s also 3+4: 3 for the Trinity, 4 for the church

Therefore, 153 must symbolize people being fishers of men and teaching them

God’s commands in the name of the Trinity to build up the foursquare church

But D.A. Carson cuts through all of what he calls “unmitigated bilge water” by saying:

*“Although there have been many, many, many very imaginative speculations about why there were 153, I suspect there were 153 because there were 153... There was one more than 152 and one fewer than 154.”* ...They just caught a lot of fish!

It’s no surprise they counted them, either to divide them up amongst each other,

Or they were just so dumbfounded, they wondered:

‘Wow! How many do you think there are?’

Then see Jesus’ invitation in v.12: **READ v.12<sup>22</sup>**

This story is all about Jesus revealing himself, and his disciples coming to recognize who he was  
John on the boat: 'It is the Lord!'; All of them around the fire: They knew it was the Lord  
And yet there almost seems to be a hesitancy in their action, even as their faith is growing  
It's like they long to ask him, "Is it really you?"... But they don't dare to do so<sup>23</sup>  
There must've been marked differences in his resurrected body, for them to want to ask  
But his words, and his miracle, and his mercy, and now his caring provision left no doubt:  
Jesus had revealed himself, and they knew who it was... It was Jesus, restored to life  
If Jesus has revealed himself to you, as Helper, Saviour, and Provider, don't hesitate!  
If you now believe he died and rose again, come and have all your needs met by him  
And to all: Come and have breakfast, as it were... Come to him and let him care for you

Even while he invites us to come, he takes the first step and comes to us: **READ v.13<sup>24</sup>**  
They're tired, they're cold, they're hungry... And Jesus cares for them there  
Bread and fish is reminiscent of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000, another lesson in provision  
He sees our needs, and cares... And he meets our needs, in power... He is who we need

And Jesus once again sets the example of loving service by serving his disciples  
He goes ahead of them, providing for all their needs—even their basic physical ones  
And he comes to them, with bread and fish in hand, to show them how much he cares  
Even in a glorified state, he still stooped to cook a meal and hand it to his friends  
So we also ought to care for one another and lovingly give of ourselves to serve  
God has placed us in each other's lives to perpetuate this practice of caring provision  
He knows our needs and hears our prayers: 'Give us this day our daily bread'  
And often, he provides by holding it out to us through one another's hands

A final comment for today, that ties it in a bow: **READ v.14<sup>25</sup>**  
Here he was! Standing, shouting, sitting, talking, eating, walking on the seashore  
And later, in Acts, Peter would testify: *"They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."* (Acts 10:39-41)

## CONCLUSION

Take a minute: What is it that you feel you need today? What are you longing for?  
What occupies your mind? What makes you think, 'If only I had *that*, I'd be happy'?  
Then hold that up to the glory of Christ, and realize he provides all we really need  
So either drop the desire for anything else, or give your desires to him,  
Asking him to fulfill your needs and desires, as he sees best  
*"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*  
(Philippians 4:19)... Jump out of the boat! Swim to him! Approach the fire! Receive his food!  
He is still revealing himself today, helping us, welcoming us, and providing for us  
This is who Jesus reveals himself to be... This is the Jesus we need... This is the Jesus I want  
And I, for one, know I need more of Jesus in my life... Do you?  
If we just have him, all will be well

**PRAY**

**Benediction: prayer, 5min,**

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<sup>1</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

<sup>2</sup> HT Kent Hughes

<sup>3</sup> After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

<sup>4</sup> After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>5</sup> HT D.A. Carson

<sup>6</sup> Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, "Children

<sup>8</sup> 1:12

<sup>9</sup> "Children, do you have any fish?"

<sup>10</sup> They answered him, "No."

<sup>11</sup> HT Glen Scrivener

<sup>12</sup> He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

<sup>13</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

<sup>14</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.

<sup>15</sup> The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

<sup>16</sup> When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place

<sup>17</sup> HT Simon Manchester

<sup>18</sup> When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

<sup>20</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them.

<sup>21</sup> And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> HT Carson

<sup>24</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

<sup>25</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.