

Easter – After the Resurrection – 3 – The Disciples go back to Fishing? -

Gospel of John, chapter 21, verse 1 – 19:- This chapter comes as an ‘appendix’ to the Gospel of John which reads as if it should end at chapter 20, verse 31. Again it is an eye-witness account (see John chapter 21, verse 24) of the important ‘Restoration of Peter’.

Verses 1 – 3:- The disciples had obeyed the command of the Lord Jesus to return to Galilee. See Mark chapter 14, verse 28; Matthew chapter 26, verse 32 and repeated by the angel at the empty tomb – Mark chapter 16, verse 7; Matthew chapter 28, verse 7. Thomas, perhaps more than the others, should have had the confidence to ‘wait patiently for the Lord’ (Psalm 37, verse 7). There appears to be a feeling of “I’m bored! Let’s do something!” A return to a worldly occupation resulted in failure!

Verses 4 – 8:- In the half light of a misty dawn the Lord Jesus was not recognised. His voice would carry well over the water - *“Lads, you haven’t any fish have you?”*. The form of the question implies that they had not caught anything. The command of the Lord Jesus went against ordinary usage when casting nets from a boat. The implication is that they were fishing in the wrong place in the wrong way. With the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ fishing, for men (see Mark chapter 1, verse 16 – 17) as well as ‘ordinary’ fish, works! Without him we can do nothing! (see John chapter 15, verse 5).

Verses 9 – 14:- Note that although the Lord could, and did, provide fish and bread for breakfast he also needed *“some of the fish that you have just caught”* (verse 10). We have our part to play in bringing ‘fish’ to the Lord!

Verses 15 – 19:- In this dialogue we need to recognise the subtle difference in the Greek words used for “love”. This has implications for the modern understanding of the phrase ‘Love is Love’ as though this is a good enough reason for ‘Anything Goes’. If you have not come across it the small book by C.S.Lewis called “The Four Loves” is well worth reading.

The two distinct words used here in John chapter 21 are - *Philia* = *deep friendship love* and *Agape* = *unconditional ‘God’ love*.

When the Lord Jesus asks Peter *“Simon, son of John, do you love me?”* in verses 15 and 16, he uses the word “*agape*” - *“Do you unconditionally love me?”*. The response of Peter uses the word “*philia*” - *“Yes Lord; you know that I deeply care for you.”* The third time that the Lord Jesus asks Peter the question (verse 17), he uses Peter’s word for love “*philia*”. *“Peter was grieved because he said to him a third time ‘Do you love me’”*! The third time the Lord Jesus asks for commitment on Peter’s terms! No wonder Peter was “*grieved*”!

The “unconditional love” of God, shown in the Lord Jesus Christ means that he is willing and able to use ordinary human beings in his service. The commands to *“Feed my lambs”*; *“Tend my sheep”* and *“Feed my sheep”* can only be fulfilled with the power and gifts provided by the Holy Spirit. The disciples were commanded to *“Wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father . . . you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit”*. (Acts chapter 1, verses 4 – 5).

The important command for Peter, and all faithful Christians is *“Follow Me!”* (verse 19)

“Alleluia! Christ is Risen! - He is Risen indeed! Alleluia!