

BREAKFAST ON THE BEACH**John 21:1-17****(Read John 21:1-17)**

Intro: This is our seventh and final lesson from the dinner table. We've learned that Jesus did so much at meal times. The truth is, there are many more sermons that could be had from the meal times of Jesus. In fact, we're ending our service with Communion today, and I could have preached from Luke 22 which is one of the Gospel passages that talk about the institution of The Lord's Supper. There are others because Jesus never missed a chance to fellowship and to break bread with those he loved. And he loved everyone. Here in this passage, he is with his beloved disciples. But as you recall, many of these lessons from the dinner table were from his mealtimes with Pharisees and other religious leaders who were trying to trip him up to say something inflammatory. They wanted him to fail. In fact by the end of his ministry, they wanted him to die – so they killed him. But Jesus still loved them.

This passage, begins with a fishing trip of sorts and ends with a commissioning. In the middle of it is breakfast on the beach. Let's look at it and learn.

First, Jesus's friends didn't know what else to do so they'd...

Gone Fishin'

- The disciples' lives had been upended. It's true that they had seen Jesus since he had been raised from the dead, but everything was different now. The Great Commission that came soon after this, had not yet happened, and they were still casting about (no pun intended). Jesus had told them to return to Galilee, so they did that – that was easy – it was their home area. Now, here they are, seven of them, five have names attached: Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, the sons of Zebedee, who we know are James and John, and two others who are unnamed for some reason – maybe to show that Jesus had disciples who had remained faithful in addition to the 11.
- I'm not sure it matters, but perhaps they just wanted food, or they wanted to make a little extra cash by selling fish, or they just wanted something to do. They knew what they were doing. For sure Peter, James and John, were fishermen – Jesus had called them from their livelihood three years before to be his disciples. At that time he promised to help them become “Fishers of Men” (Mark 1:14-20, Matthew 4:18-22). So here they are, wondering what was next and not being the kind of people to let the grass grow under their feet, they returned to what was familiar.
- I've heard it said that a bad day fishing is better than a good day at work, and not being a fisherman as much as I'm a Hunter, I don't quite understand that. I've never been very good at fishing. Not as good as some I know anyway. I just don't have the patience. But I think that, perhaps for Peter, doing what he knew was a way to make the day better so he said “I'm going fishing.” And since it was as good a plan as any – they all went with him.
- But their night of fishing was just like any number of the times I've gone fishing - they caught nothing.
They fished all night and they caught no fishes,
They fished all night and they caught no fishes,
They fished all night and they caught no fishes, out on the deep blue sea.
- As morning came they headed back for shore. But through the mist they saw someone standing on the beach. They didn't recognize that it was Jesus. Don't judge them. They were just getting used to the idea that he wasn't dead anymore. After all they had, some of them, anyway, witnessed him dying on the cross – that was traumatic to say the least. But he had appeared to them several times, but that was in Jerusalem, so they didn't expect to see Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. They didn't even recognize him when he called out, “Did you boys catch anything?” (“*Children, do you have any fish?*” John 21:5)
- This stranger then made a suggestion: he called out through the misty distance, “*Throw your net on the other side.*” which they did and they caught so many fish they couldn't pull it into the boat.
- That's when John knew it was Jesus. That's when Peter put his clothes back on and jumped into the water and swam into the shore, he was always impulsive that way. He left his friends to bring the boat, along with a net full of 153 fish into the shallows.
- It was true, it was Jesus waiting for them, and it must have been Friday because...

Jesus had a fish fry going

- Jesus had fish baking straight on the charcoal, and he had bread. He added some of their fish to the fire, and said, “Come and have breakfast!” and they sat down for yet another meal together. And they all knew, this was definitely Jesus. He was the one that had taken two fish and five barley cakes and fed thousands and thousands of people. He was the one that had invited them to a Passover meal where he, the rabbi, THE MASTER, had washed THEIR feet. He was the one that had broken the bread at that same meal and passed it to them and said “*Take, and eat, this is my body, broken for you.*” And at that same meal he had taken the cup of wine, and he had passed it around to them and said, “*Drink this, this is my blood, shed for you.*” And this is the one, who, when he came upon two grieving disciples on the road to Emmaus, had amazed them by how he knew scripture, but he knew nothing about how their rabbi had died on the Cross days before. But they had definitely recognized him when he broke the bread at the meal at the end of their journey. Here at this breakfast on the beach his disciples recognized who he was as he broke bread with them. I think it's good for us, as we break bread symbolically at Communion today, to recognize our Lord and Savior. After all, he told us to do this in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19). If there's no other lesson from the dinner table that we take away from these seven sermons, I pray it would be this one.
- After a night of fishing frustration that actually worked up a great appetite, this breakfast on the beach was very satisfying. But there was one more thing that needed to be satisfied...

Peter needed to be restored

- As Peter sat at another fire in the courtyard of the high priest, he had vehemently denied that he knew who Jesus of Nazareth was (Luke 22:54-62 and Matthew 26:69-75). He didn't do it just once, he did it three times, as Jesus's said he would, and as he had insisted he would never do.
- Peter betrayed his Lord. Oh, he didn't sell him out to the religious leaders like Judas had done, but he'd still betrayed him when Jesus, by every appearance, needed him most. The truth was, Peter needed Jesus most. The truth was Jesus needed to go to the cross to die for all of us betrayers – not just Peter .
- That was the truth. But that didn't make Peter feel any better. Peter had left his best friend down. Peter, who's very name means “Rock” had guilt overwhelming him and weighing him down like a rock. But Jesus welcomed him to breakfast because he had not given up on Peter for giving up on him. You see, there was a very necessary conversation to be had...

Peter, do you love me?

- Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?”
- The first time he asks him: “*Simon, son of John, Do you love me more than these?*” Now, Jesus wasn't comparing the love that his disciples had for one another or that his disciples had for him. He wasn't asking Peter for a comparison. Instead he was asking Peter, “*Do you love me more than all these other things involved in this breakfast, your friends, a good meal, a good livelihood, even the promise of a big payday? Do you love me more than all these things?*” Peter says, “*Yes Lord. You know that I love you.*” And Jesus, hearing this confirmation commissions him with “*Feed my lambs*”. Jesus was saying, “No matter what, even if you don't get to eat, you must feed my innocent lambs. Even if you starve and die doing it, you feed my lambs.”
- Jesus asks again, “*Simon, son of John, do you love me?*” Peter answers again, “*Yes, Lord you know that I love you.*” And Jesus commissions him again with, “*Tend my sheep.*” In other words, “*Once you are done feeding these lambs, you make sure that they are cared for. Make sure ALL their needs are provided.*”
- Finally, a third time, “*Simon, Son of John, do you love me?*” Peter answers, “*Lord, you know everything. You've always known everything. When you called me from being a fisherman 3 years ago, you knew me. You knew me when I proclaimed that you were the Messiah. You knew me when I promised I would never deny you even if I went to my death. You knew me when I took my sword and lock the ear off of a bystander when you were arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. You knew me when the ladies who discovered the empty tomb we're told to go and tell the disciples, and Peter that you were risen from the dead. You've always known me. You've always known everything. You know my heart, and you know that I love you.*” And Jesus gave the final commissioning, “*Feed my sheep.*” And Peter was restored. And Peter lived out that commissioning, faithfully.

Conclusion: It might have been on the beach. But it was the best breakfast ever. Eating on the beach has never been my favorite thing – too much sand and too much wind. But this breakfast on the beach meant that physical hunger was satisfied as sustenance was provided by Jesus. It also meant the spiritual hunger was satisfied as the disciples were reminded their Lord was risen and victorious over death and the grave. But for Peter and for every Christ Follower then and down to the present, is the promise that Jesus came to save, forgive, restore, and commission us for his kingdom work. Amen.