

ViralStJames Bible Study #1: John 21 1-19

The Background

This detailed story of one of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances sees the disciples return to the place where they were first called to follow Jesus – the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It closes the cycle that began back in Matthew (Read Matthew 4 18-22).

Peter was one of the first disciples called by Jesus, and was one of those closest to him, being present at the transfiguration. Just before his arrest, Peter promises Jesus that he will lay down his life for him (John 13.37). Yet whilst Jesus is before the High Priest, Peter's courage fails, and he denies even knowing him three times (John 18 15-18; 25-27).

The Passage

John 21:1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ 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.

John 21:4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net to 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 there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

John 21:9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

John 21:15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

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The Questions

- 1) Put yourself in Peter's shoes after the resurrection - What do you think Peter must have been feeling like knowing Jesus had returned?
- 2) Why do you think Peter decides to go fishing? Do you think he was right to do so?
- 3) In the Coldplay (British rock band) song 'Fun' there is a line that says: '*Nothing's too broken to find our way back*'. How does Jesus seek to bring Peter back?
- 4) Is there more to forgiveness than simply saying 'I forgive you/it's ok now'?
- 5) What characterises Jesus's encounter with the disciples throughout this story? (If you have a translation that contains Jesus's words in red, read those out, one after the other) Does this give any clues as to what life in 'The New Normal' should be for Jesus's disciples?
- 6) How easy is it to leave behind the old ways and embrace the new?
- 7) At the end of the story, what does Jesus ask of Peter? Is it costless?
- 8) What do you take away from this passage?

The Space for notes or doodles
