

## **Fish for Breakfast**

### **Meditation on John 21: 1-14**

#### **Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples**

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.

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.

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.

Gathered there together...

some men who'd just gone through hell.

Not knowing what to do, how to survive, and how on earth to carry on.

Devastated.

Paralysed.

Full of fear and pain.

Shocked.

Traumatized.

Marked forever...

Nothing would ever be the same again after their friend had been murdered on a cross.

They were in danger.

Terrible danger.

If you publicly showed sympathy with someone who'd been condemned to death on the cross, if you only shed one tear for him that his enemies could see, you risked being imprisoned and killed yourself.

The Roman law for its colonies insisted on death on the cross for all who showed sympathy with someone just crucified...

...and there they were by the Sea of Tiberias...

Eventually Peter says: "I am going fishing."

He decides to do what he's always done.  
What he'd trained to do.  
The ordinary everyday thing when you were a fisherman.  
What else could he do?  
How else could he to cope with his restless hands, his hungry heart and his wounded soul?  
He needed something to do that felt normal, natural...

He reminds me of the women on Easter morning when they took spices and ointments to go and anoint Jesus' dead body...  
They also do the ordinary thing, they do what all women of their time and land would have been doing:  
Prepare a dead body for its final journey.  
Do the only thing that still can be done...

Peter is going fishing.

The others say to him: "We will go with you."  
They follow him.  
They need someone to take the lead.  
Thomas, Nathanael, two sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.  
Six desperate men, having looked disaster in the eye, and now so unsure of what to do...

As Peter, they do what they have always done.  
They go and get the boat...  
...but shock and disappointment seem to haunt them:  
they catch no fish...  
Their carefully plucked up courage put at risk again.  
What they'd just tried to still their worrying souls with is failing...  
That night they caught nothing.

When daybreak is near...  
When it becomes clear that that was it for that night...  
When they are about to give up, they see somebody on the beach.  
We know, it's Jesus.  
But they don't.  
"Friends, you have no fish, have you?"

Why state and emphasize something that is obviously visible and clear?  
Why put salt in the wound?  
You have no fish...  
What does it do to people when their failure is pointed out so loudly?  
What must it mean to the traumatized disciples to be made aware of their lack of success?

How must they feel?  
Couldn't one avoid the discussion about the empty nets?  
Rather help them to overcome their frustration?  
None of all that.  
And they don't really seem to miss it either.  
No, they say.  
Simply "No".  
They had no fish... no nothing...  
Nets empty.  
Hands empty.  
Hearts empty.  
Maybe that is as low as you can get when you are in pain and despair.

The disciples still don't know it is Jesus, when the man tells them to go out and try fishing again.  
But: to cast out their nets on the right side of the boat.  
Had they before on the left side?  
Or on the wrong side?  
And how did he know?  
Had he been watching them?  
What are the wrong sides on which people try to go about their everyday jobs and fail?  
And how can Jesus then come into the situation and show us where to make it better?  
If he talked to us, would we do what he said?

The disciples do what the man suggests.  
They still don't know it's Jesus.  
They simply do what the stranger says and experience a miracle that they would probably not have thought possible:  
they cannot haul in their fishing net because they'd caught so many fish.  
Only then does one disciple recognise the man.  
The disciple who seems to have the closest relationship with Jesus,  
the disciple who, under the cross, had been given to Mary as a son, and to whom Mary had been given as a mother: he recognised Jesus.  
"It is the Lord!"  
Nothing more and nothing less.  
No explanation given...  
Just: it is the Lord.

And as he ran out on Easter morning immediately after Mary had told them of the empty tomb, so Peter does now.  
He loses no time.  
He jumps into the water and swims towards Jesus.

A comical picture.  
A funny scene that we can now imagine.  
As Peter wades to the shore the other disciples follow in the boat.  
They come and meet Jesus just as he does, but without the exciting effort  
of getting all wet and running heedlessly again...  
They are dragging the net full of fish.  
They care for their catch.

...to discover that they had not needed this.  
There were already fish on a charcoal fire, - and bread.  
Food had already been provided.  
So, what should they do with their fish?  
Jesus – has an elegant solution: “Bring some of the fish that you have just  
caught.”  
Eat from what I give you and add what you can provide...

In the story at this point Simon Peter goes all the way back on board.  
We are given the exact number of fish they'd caught: 153...  
...and the little extra information that even though there were so many  
fish the net was not torn.  
Fishing in Jesus' name seems to work beyond the rules of normality:  
there is fish in the morning which is against all the rules the fishermen  
had learned over the years.  
And the nets can hold a load that they realistically could not...  
We are left with the mysterious and miraculous outcome of an action  
beyond reasoning.

Jesus doesn't waste any words about what has happened.  
It is as if he turns the page and opens a new chapter: “Come and have  
breakfast.”  
Jesus had turned water into wine at a wedding reception.  
He provided lunch for thousands.  
Here after his resurrection we see him caring for his friends by providing  
fish and bread for breakfast.

And as it happened in Emmaus, it may have happened here:  
it is when Jesus offers the disciples food that they fully and finally  
recognize him.  
It is in the breaking of the bread.  
In the invitation to come and be fed.  
It is now clear who he is.  
They don't need to ask anymore!  
They know it is the Lord.  
As they have done so often before they now sit together, share a meal, and  
experience being nurtured and encouraged.

What was possible before Jesus' death –  
that they eat and drink together –  
is now possible after his death, too.  
Do it in remembrance of me,  
Jesus had told them in the Last Supper.

The Breakfast by the Lake only confirmed what they already knew:  
they should remember him...  
recognize him in their everyday lives...  
and do what he suggests they do:  
cast out your nets on the right side of the boat.

And here yet another chapter begins – the chapter of our lives:  
we turn the page and discover that overleaf our story with the risen Christ  
begins.  
Let us cast out our nets on the right side of the boat,  
and let us look forward with joyful expectation to what will happen then.  
As in the story: life with the risen Christ is full of surprises.  
Just live it!  
Amen.