

# A Faded Resurrection

Are we living life as usual or life in light of the resurrection?

John 21

The Fourth Sunday of Resurrection

# A busy forty days . . .

He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles . . . (1 Corinthians 15.5-7)

- ▶ What is happening after the resurrection? On one hand, it's a busy time for Jesus; he's not with the disciples as much as before his death. He is seeing different people, confirming his resurrection, and finalizing his ministry on earth before his return to the Father.

# On the other hand . . .

Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. (John 21.2-3)

- ▶ For his disciples, it seems that the impact of the resurrection — the most momentous event in human history — has faded and, instead of moving forward in light of what they know and have experienced, Jesus’ disciples revert to the past from which Jesus had called them.

# Jesus shows up . . .

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee . . . but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” (John 21.1, 4, 7)

- ▶ Why does Jesus show up on Sunday when the disciples are together? Or on the shore when they are fishing? Or, for that matter, why did he show up anyplace that we find him in the gospel accounts? Or, to ask the ultimate question: why did he show up here on earth? In a word: revelation.

No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John 1.18 NRV

Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. . . . For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” (John 12.44-46, 49-50)

# The Priority of Revelation

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee . . . but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” (John 21.1, 4, 7)

- ▶ The default setting for humanity is spiritual blindness and ignorance about God and Jesus—a blindness and ignorance that leads to spiritual death, an eternal separation from light, love, and joy—what the Bible calls “eternal life.” Revelation is God’s response to this dilemma.

If the Good News we preach is hidden to anyone, it is hidden from the one who is on the road to eternal death. Satan, who is the god of this evil world, has made him blind, unable to see the glorious light of the Gospel that is shining upon him or to understand the amazing message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is God. (2 Corinthians 4.3-4 LB)

For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News. (2 Timothy 1.9-11 NLT)

- ▶ Revealing the Father whose command leads to eternal life (John 12.50) was the mission of Jesus.
- ▶ Revealing Jesus whose way leads to the Father is the mission of Jesus' followers.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14.6)

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20.21)

# Two Sides of Revelation

Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20.28)

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” (John 21.1, 4, 7)

“Lord” is more than just another name or title for Jesus. The Greek word is *kurios* meaning: supreme in authority, controller, master. It is used interchangeably through the Gospels for both Jesus and God as Father and Jehovah. “Lord” embodies every aspect of who Jesus is as the One and Only.

- (1) Do I recognize Jesus as Lord? “Who do you say I am?” was the question Jesus posed to his disciples and the question that every intended follower of Jesus must answer. My answer determines *how* I will follow Jesus, and the *way* I follow Jesus reveals the authenticity of my answer. (cf. Luke 9.18-26)
- (2) Do I proclaim Jesus as Lord? Belief and witness are inseparable; if Jesus really is my Lord, the message of my life *and* the message of my mouth will be that he is the One and Only. (cf. Romans 10.8-10)

# The Paradigm of the Net

He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. (John 21.5-6)

Peter has gone back to fishing, so Jesus replicates a miracle from when he called Peter from fishing for fish to fishing for people (Luke 5.4-7; Matthew 4.18-20). With this action, Jesus is vividly reminding his disciples of a “net” parable he had previously told them.

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 13.47-50

To follow Jesus also means that I accept the calling to fish for people (Matthew 4.19). Here are four things to know—

- (1) We are to “fish” for the salvation of lost people.
- (2) Our net is the gospel of Jesus Christ. (cf. Luke 24.47-48)
- (3) Jesus has instructed us to “catch fish” in all nations of the world. (Matthew 28.19; Mark 16.15)
- (4) Many people will be where we are not inclined to fish.  
We must obey Jesus and cast the net of the gospel on the “other” side.

# The Principle of Sheep-ology

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

Then he said to [Peter], “Follow me.” (John 21.16, 19)

The last time we saw Peter in proximity to Jesus, he was vehemently denying any association with Jesus (Matthew 26.71-75).

The next time Jesus engaged Peter in personal conversation, it was to tell him, “This is how you love me.”

“Sheep-ology” teaching (John 10.1-30) was one of Jesus’ most important teachings—and one that incurred a lot of controversy and animosity. His central emphasis was that:

- (1) he is the Good Shepherd who willingly lays down his life for his sheep (10.11, 14, 17);
- (2) his sheep are those whom he has called into relationship with him and his Father (10.16, 27-30).

In his teaching, Jesus presented himself as the ultimate fulfillment of the OT prophecies which anticipated the Sovereign LORD coming himself to search for his sheep, to rescue, heal and care for them (Ezekiel 34).

Previously, Peter had acted like a hired hand, thinking only of saving his own life (10.12-13). Now Jesus connects Peter's love for him with Jesus' own care for his sheep.

Jesus' sheep-ology has a central emphasis in the writings of his original followers who give continued revelation of what it means to know, love, and follow the way of Jesus. To the elders of the church at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul said:

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20.28)

To those who had spiritual oversight among the churches in Asia, the Apostle Peter wrote:

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5.2-4)

Love for Jesus is demonstrated and authenticated in deeply caring for the spiritual welfare of others.

The Apostle John emphasized this principle of “authentication and demonstration”—

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4.19-21)

Inseparable from loving Jesus is our deep concern for the spiritual welfare of others:

- ▶ modeling the intense concern of a God who so loved the world that He sent his Son (John 3.16);
- ➔ How are you expressing God's love to unbelievers—those who are Jesus' "lost sheep" (Matthew 9.36)?

- ▶ attentive to the spiritual health of others to make sure no one is becoming distant in following Jesus (Hebrews 3.13);
  - ➔ How are you encouraging others to be an apprentice of Jesus?

An easy way to do this is to find one person with whom you can spend half an hour with each week, sharing what you have read or journaled in the Scriptures over the past week, praying together, reading through *Practicing the Way* together.

- ▶ prioritizing being together in worship and formation as a community in unity, and not as individuals in preference (Acts 2.42, 46; Hebrews 10.24-25).
  - ➔ One of the most easily attained ways of showing Jesus' love for his sheep is simply to show up and be with other believers—to put the agenda of the body of Christ ahead of my own. **Worship** (Sunday) and **spiritual formation** (growing together as apprentices of Jesus, mid-week gathering) are the two basic building blocks of being part of Jesus' community of believers.

What one thing will you do this week to live in light of these resurrection truths?

And the seed that fell on the good ground is like those who hear God's teaching with good, honest hearts, retain it, and by putting it into consistent practice, produce a harvest of results.

Luke 8.15