

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 4/11/93
John 21:1-14 "Surprised by the Risen Christ"

Intro: Have you ever been surprised by someone you didn't expect to see?

Illust:

Today is Easter Sunday. We are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Q: Did you ever notice the surprises connected with the resurrection account of Jesus Christ? John 20 is full of surprised people:

1. Mary Magdalene was surprised that the stone was moved (20:1).
2. Peter and John ran to the tomb and were surprised at what they saw.

The sepulcher was empty, except for the neatly arranged linens that had previously wrapped the body of Jesus (20:5-8).

3. Mary Magdalene was surprised again, twice in fact. First, she was surprised when she herself looked in the tomb and saw 2 angels where Jesus' body had once laid (20:12). Then she was surprised when she left the gravesite, and ran into a person she thought was the gardener, but quickly learned was none other than her resurrected Lord! (20:16)

4. Then the 12 disciples, minus Judas and Thomas, received the shock of their lives! Fearing for their lives, they were meeting behind locked doors, wondering if the antagonistic Jewish leaders would hunt them down next. When all of the sudden, Jesus surprised them by entering the room, and He didn't even use the door! (20:19)

5. A week later, the risen Lord surprised the doubting disciple, Thomas. Remember what the Lord told Thomas? In 20:27, "Then saith He to Thomas, Reach here thy finger, and behold My hands..."

There were many people surprised by the Risen Christ. But perhaps none was so impacted as the man described in the account of John 21:1-14. His name was Peter.

Observation: Lots of people "know" that Jesus Christ is alive. They believe in the resurrection of Christ. You do, or you probably wouldn't be here, in church, celebrating the Lord's resurrection on Easter Sunday.

But here's the tragedy. For many people, the resurrection of Christ makes little difference. It's a historical fact they have tucked away in their heads that has no bearing on their lives.

That's kind of the way it was for Peter, until what happened in John 21.

Key: After his surprise encounter with the risen Christ in Jn 21, Peter was never the same again! Peter was surprised by the Risen Christ.

Q: What happened to Peter? The same thing that can happen to us. My prayer for each person here today is that the resurrected Christ would have the same impact on our lives that He had on Peter's.

Q: What difference should the resurrection of Christ make in our lives?

Proposition: Let's take a look at the 3 phases Peter experienced in his life, as he was surprised by the Risen Christ. Ask yourself, "Where am I?"

- I. Phase #1: Regret (1-3)
- II. Phase #2: Recognition (4-8)
- III. Phase #3: Restoration (9-14)
 - A. To Fellowship
 - B. To Service

As we begin our study, we find Peter in phase 1...

I. Phase #1: Regret (1-3)

V 21 "After these things Jesus showed Himself..."

After these things. What things? You remember the events well. In ch 18, Jesus was betrayed by one of his own, and then arrested by a hateful mob of Jewish authorities. In ch 19, Jesus endured the mockery of a rigged trial, and the horror of a criminal's execution by crucifixion. In ch 20, the gospel writer recorded the tremendous account of our Savior's resurrection, and his post-resurrection surprise encounters. After these things.

Q: What happened after these things?

A: Notice a key, twice-repeated phrase in v 1--"Jesus showed Himself."

The verb is active. It means "to shine forth." Jesus manifested Himself. With great purpose, with great intention, the resurrected Christ revealed Himself. Don't miss that. It's the key to everything that happens in ch 21. Peter's not the main character. Jesus is. In ch 21 the resurrected Lord unveils Himself, His person, His heart, His ambition (see also v 14).

Q: To whom did Jesus unveil Himself?

A: V 1 "to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias."

V 2 "There were together Simon Peter..."

Jesus showed himself to 7 disciples. Where were the other 4? We're not told. Simon Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael were there. So were the sons of Zebedee (James and John). So were two other unnamed disciples.

Q: Why are the names of these two not mentioned? Perhaps they serve as representatives for all followers of Christ. Plug yourself into the story.

There's the backdrop. Now watch the plot of the story begin to develop...

V 3 "Simon Peter said unto them, I go fishing..."

Peter: "I go fishing."

The Others: "We also go with thee."

What's the significance? Why did Peter go fishing? Remember, fishing was no hobby for Peter. Fishing was his natural occupation, his trade, his livelihood. At least it was, before he met Jesus. In fact, more than half of the 12 disciples were fishermen.

So why did Peter go fishing? I'd like to suggest to you that Peter was going through a serious phase of Regret. He was overwhelmed with regret. True, he'd

already seen the risen Christ. He knew Jesus was alive. But things weren't the same as before. How could they be?

Q: What caused Peter to struggle with regret?

A: Simply put, he'd blown it. He'd blown it at least 3 times.

1. First, he fell asleep in the garden.

Mk 14:37-38 "And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

2. Then, he abandoned his Savior.

Do you know what Peter did when the soldiers came? First, he grapped a sword, and tried to sever a man's head from his body. But he missed. Jesus told him to put the sword away. Peter lost it. Do you know what he and the others did?

Mk 14:50 "And they all forsook Him, and fled."

But nothing caused Peter's regret to mount more than what he did hours later.

3. Peter denied he knew Christ three times.

Mk 14:71 "But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man..."

Listen. When Peter said, "I go fishing," he was overwhelmed with regret. And he was confused. Yes, he knew that Jesus was alive. But Jesus kept appearing and disappearing. Peter didn't know when he'd see his Master again. He became restless. So did the others. He was perplexed, confused, uncertain, and full of regret. Perhaps he thought, "The Lord can never use me again."

So he went back to what he knew best--fishing.

Observation: The world is full of people who are overwhelmed with regret. Perhaps you are. Maybe you've blown it. Maybe your dreams have been shattered and you can't seem to put the pieces of your life back together. Maybe you've let the Lord down, and you're wrestling with regret.

Illust:

Q: By the way, how'd the fishing trip go? Not too well!

V 3 "They went forth...and caught nothing"

Peter had regret upon regret. He'd blown it as an apostle. Now he's blown it as a fisherman!

Tran: Phase 1 was Regret. In the next scene, let's watch Peter go through a second...

II. Phase #2: Recognition (4-8)

V 4 "But when morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore..."

V 8 indicates that the boat was about 100 yards from shore (200 cubits). It was early morning, probably semi-dark and misty. The frustrated band of fishermen glanced to shore, and saw a lone individual. They didn't recognize him. Then he spoke.

V 5 "Children have you any food?" (NIV "fish")

That's not a question 7 emptyhanded fishermen wanted to hear! Notice their abrupt answer, "No." I wonder how they said it, "NO!" or "Naw..." No doubt they were frustrated.

Then this mysterious person spoke again...

V 6 "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find."

I don't know what went through impetuous Peter's mind. Remember, he wasn't the kind of guy who went with the flow. He was a take-charge kind of guy. "Cast your net on the right side." What? No doubt they'd cast it on ever side possible.

But something about that voice sounded so authoritative, so confident, so familiar. So Peter and the others, hauled in their nets, and cast them on the right side.

V 6 "They cast...and now were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish."

Wow! That got their attention! Then things began to click.

V 7 "Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved (=John) said to Peter, It's the Lord."

From Regret to Recognition! Peter must have felt a sense of "dejavu." This wasn't the first time Jesus had filled his nets with fish. No doubt as Peter saw the haul of fish flopping in his nets he thought back to an incredible experience he had 3 years earlier. Turn to Luke 5.

Luke 5 happened right after Jesus called Peter to follow Him (Jn 1). Peter had gone back to fishing. Then along came Jesus...

v 2 Peter was washing up his nets, after an unsuccessful night of fishing.

v 3 Jesus borrowed Peter's boat to teach from, a kind of floating pulpit.

v 4 Then Jesus told Peter, "Launch out...let down your nets..."

v 5 Remember Peter's reply? My paraphrase, "Are you serious?!" But he did.

v 6 "And when he had done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fish."

How did Peter respond?

v 8 "He fell at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

What did Jesus say to Peter?

v 10 "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Jesus gave Peter a new calling in life. No longer would he catch fish, but men.

Now, don't miss the connection between Lk 5 and Jn 21. In Jn 21, three years later, Peter had gone back to fishing. He'd blown it. And after all he'd done, he had his doubts about whether he could ever be of any use to Jesus. Then along came Jesus, and He performed the same miracle He used when He commissioned him the first time.

Q: What did Peter do when he recognized Jesus?

V 7 "Now when Simon Peter heard it was the Lord...he cast himself in the sea."

As was the practice of hardworking fishermen, while working, Peter had stripped down to his undergarment for mobility. When he recognized Jesus, he grabbed his outer coat, and hit the water. Why?

I think I know why. He wanted to get to Jesus! He didn't care about fish anymore. All he could think of was his loving Master! "You guys take care of the fish. You can keep the fish. I'm going to Jesus!"

Illust: Story of German soldier who went to hospital...

Listen friends. The church is not an organization. The church is not a business. The church is not a country club. The church is people, people who have come to grips with their regrets, and looked to Jesus. We are people who have been surprised by the Risen Christ. He'd changed our lives.

Peter found new hope when he recognized the Risen Christ.

Q: Have you ever recognized the Risen Lord?

Illust:

Tran: What happens when a person is surprised by the Risen Christ? Let's look at Peter again. Phase 1, Regret. Phase 2, Recognition.

III. Phase #3: Restoration (9-14)

V 8 "And the other disciples came in a little boat..." Notice what they found.

V 9 "As soon as they were come, they saw..." Three things:

1. Campfire
2. Fish and chips
3. Jesus

Q: What was the first thing Jesus said when he saw the disciples?

A: Did He say, "What in the world were you guys doing fishing? I told you 3 years ago I'd called you to fish for men, not fish! What am I going to do with you?!"

Is that what he said? No. What did he say?

V 10 "Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which you have caught."

Guess who moved first? Peter!

V 11 "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land..."

Why did Jesus want the fish? Watch what Jesus did next.

V 12 "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine..."

You say, "I don't get it. What's Jesus doing?"

Key: Jesus is restoring His disciples. Regret. Recognition. Restoration.

The disciples, especially Peter, were full of regret. So Jesus restored them. O, do you see the amazing love of Jesus here! He doesn't chastize His followers. He doesn't browbeat them. He restores them.

He restored them in 2 areas...

A. To Fellowship

V 13 "Jesus cometh and taketh bread, and giveth them..."

Did you see that? Jesus made the disciples sit down, and He took the place of a waiter (Morgan 328). A waiter! We go to a restaurant. Someone waits on us.

I confess, I can't fathom this! The King of Kings, the Matchless Lord of the Universe, the Risen, Glorified Christ actually served His followers! He carried the

bread to them. He carried the fish to them. He waited on them until they were satisfied.

Q: Why did He do that? To restore them to fellowship.

V 14 "This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples..."

He SHOWED HIMSELF. Listen. Christianity is not a list of rules. It's not a religion. It's a person to person relationship, between the Lord Jesus Christ and His followers.

Q: Did you realize that Christ desires our fellowship?

Rev 3:20 "Behold I stand at the door and knock...I will come in to him and sup..."

Christian, how's your fellowship with Christ? Are you close to Him?

Illust:

Jesus restored his disciples. First, He restored them to fellowship.

B. To Service

In the verses that follow, three times Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" and three times He commissioned Peter, "Feed my sheep."

Why? Jesus restored Peter to service.

Key: When Jesus saves us, He saves us to serve.

Challenge: If Jesus died a martyr's death, and remained dead, you can forget Him. He's no different than Alexander the Great or Muhammed or any other influential person from history. If He died, and stayed dead. But...

V 14 "...after He was risen from the dead."

Jesus is alive! Jesus conquered death! You and I must come to grips with Him! There's no option. Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other..."

Peter never got over what happened in Jn 21. In fact, years later he preached a message where he looked back to this turning point. Here's what he said about Jesus...

Acts 10:40-42 "Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained by God to be the Judge of living and dead. To Him gave all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

Illust: Story of violinist who smashed violin

Key: It isn't the violin that makes the music. It's the violinist.

I wonder how many people here today can identify with Peter. You came into this room today full of regret, full of pain. Perhaps you made a spiritual decision years ago, but you've blown it. You feel like you're on the shelf. You wonder if things can ever be right between you and God.

Listen. Do what Peter did. Run as fast as you can to the Resurrected Christ!