

Indecision after the Resurrection

John 21: 1-8

Over the years, statistics have consistently shown Easter Sunday as the highest attended day of the year. The same statistics also reveal, in a majority of churches, the Sunday following Easter is the least attended day of the year. There are many factors contributing to these numbers, but their reality cannot be denied. Even among those who are faithful in serving the Lord, there seems to be a decline in passion following the Easter events. This may be due, at least in part, to so much energy being focused on Easter, and a desire to relax a bit once the ministry emphasis is over.

As I pondered this very real scenario, I realized it is a situation many face. Our spiritual lives are filled with highs and lows. At times the decline from a high to a low is gradual, and at other times it comes rather quickly. Again, this can be attributed to many factors, but it is a scenario every believer faces at times throughout their spiritual journey.

The text we have considered today deals with the same scenario in the lives of the disciples. They had been through much in recent days and weeks. The one they believed to be the Christ had been crucified on the cross. There He died and was buried, and yet He rose again in triumphant life three days later. In fact, Jesus had appeared to these men in bodily form, speaking to them in the Upper Room. The evidence was clear that Jesus was alive, and yet they were dealing with doubt and indecision.

As we deal with the struggles often following a spiritual high, I hope the [realities](#) revealed in this passage will provide wisdom and strength to press on through the difficulties. As we consider these verses, I want to preach on: [Indecision after the Resurrection](#).

I. The Discouragement They Faced (1-3) – In the opening verses of our text, we discover the great discouragement these men faced, shortly following the resurrection. Consider:

A. Their Decision (3) – [Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.](#) Here we discover the first sign of genuine discouragement on the part of these disciples. Peter decided that he would go fishing, and the others decided to join him. Now, several of these men had been fishermen prior to their call to follow Jesus. This is not highly unusual, and I am not criticizing their desire to fish and provide for their families. However, most scholars agree this was not a leisurely fishing trip, nor was it an attempt to gather needed provisions. Many scholars contend this was a conscious decision to return unto the life and employment they knew prior to following the Lord. These men were struggling with their faith and the call to serve the Lord.

- Lest we become critical of them, I think we all would have to agree that we have dealt with similar emotions, even making similar decisions. These decisions are often made in times of weakness or at times when we've exhausted much energy in serving, and failed to see the desired results. No doubt, we have all struggled with our faith and questioned if we were actually doing what the Lord desired of us.

B. Their Diversity (2-3b) – *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.* ^[3] *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.* We know that Peter, James and John were together, and that they had previously been fishermen. It is believed that Andrew and Philip were the two unnamed disciples, along with Thomas and Nathanael. In all, seven of the remaining eleven disciples joined together on this trip. It appears these men were all dealing with questions and uncertainty. Keep in mind, these were the same men who had followed Jesus, hearing His wisdom, seeing His miracles, and even encountered Him alive after the resurrection. Yet, they are found struggling with their faith.

- This should in no way encourage us to doubt the Lord or question His call for our lives, but it does offer a measure of comfort. We are not the first to deal with difficulty regarding our faith. If you serve the Lord for any length of time, you will deal with seasons of doubt and uncertainty.

C. Their Determination (3c) – *They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately.* The disciples had reached a decision and wasted no time acting on their plan. Likely they knew the evening would provide the best opportunity to catch fish, and they didn't want to miss their chance.

- Again, I don't want to sound over-critical of these men, but it is interesting how quickly they all agreed to Peter's proposition. If in fact this was a desire to return to the old way of life, there was no effort to seek the Lord in prayer, not even further discussion of the issue. I fear that we often make decisions on a whim, based entirely on circumstantial evidence. This doesn't always lead to despair, but when it comes to serving the Lord, especially when endeavoring to take a new path, we must seek the Lord's guidance in prayer. We can easily find ourselves in a mess when we act on impulse rather than seeking to follow the Lord through prayer.

D. Their Defeat (3d) – *and that night they caught nothing.* A night that began with optimistic enthusiasm ended in defeat. A quick decision was made to go fishing, and the men toiled all night in an effort to catch fish. Unfortunately, their efforts were in vain. They had nothing to show for their night of labor on the Sea of Galilee.

- When we consider the spiritual implications revealed in the passage, we discover a profound truth – we cannot expect success when we fail to seek the Lord. I don't think Jesus would have cared one way or the other if the men decided to take a leisurely fishing trip, but this wasn't a trip for fun. It appears the men were contemplating what to do with the rest of their lives. Jesus wanted them to see and understand that they still needed to rely upon Him. A man may achieve a measure of success through personal effort alone, but it will never bring the fulfillment his heart desires. We cannot have real peace and joy apart from committed devotion to Christ!

II. The Discovery They Made (4-8) – Although the night had brought discouragement and defeat, the disciples would make a profound discovery with the coming of the morning. They discovered:

A. Jesus' Presence (4) – *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* The disciples may have noticed a man standing on the shore that morning, but they had yet to recognize that it was Jesus. Before the morning would end, they would recognize Him and spend precious time in fellowship with Him. Nothing had been said about the Lord when the decision was made to go fishing. They may not have been thinking of the Lord, but He was certainly mindful of them. His love and devotion to these men was not dependent upon their commitment to Him!

- This should bring hope to every believer struggling in the journey. There will be some long nights of uncertainty; but when the morning comes, we can find Jesus standing on the shore! He is aware of the struggles we face and the doubts that fill our minds. He knows when we are weary from the journey, contemplating our next move. The Lord is always aware of His own, and He will be there to provide the strength and guidance we need. We are never alone or forsaken!

B. Jesus' Perception (5) – *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.* We must understand that this was not a question seeking information; this was a question to cause reflection among the disciples. Jesus knew they had toiled all night and caught nothing. He was not insensitive, but He wanted them to consider the night they had spent. The Lord already knew their hearts and the need they faced.

- There are times in our lives when the Spirit raises questions. He is not asking because He doesn't know; He is asking so we will have to admit where we are and the needs we face. While that is sobering to consider, it is also comforting to know that we serve one who is well aware of the lives we live and the struggles we face. How often do we put forth much effort in our own abilities and come up with an empty net? The Lord wants us to be fruitful in ministry, but we also must be aware of our dependence upon Him.

C. Jesus' Provision (6) – *And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.* As I considered this, I was reminded of the marvelous grace of our Lord. Knowing their motivation and the doubts they faced, Jesus could have rebuked their unbelief. He could have scolded them and used their defeat to teach a valuable lesson. However, Jesus responded in grace. He urged them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, and they caught so many fish they were unable to draw in the net.

- Aren't you thankful for the Lord's gracious provision? I know there have been many times in my life that I deserved to be chastened and rebuked. Many times, I have failed the Lord and yet He continued to deal with me according to His loving favor and grace! He knows we make mistakes in our efforts to serve Him, and yet He continues to bless us in spite of ourselves! What a gracious, loving Savior we serve!

D. The Disciples' Recognition (7-8) – *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. [8] And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.* Following the miraculous catch of fish, John recognized Jesus. Having declared it was the Lord, the other disciples could not contain their excitement. Peter even jumped into the water and swam to shore. The others came in the boat, dragging the net filled with fish. They all recognized Jesus and were determined to get to Him. They wanted to be near the one they loved and believed was the Christ.

- This reveals a beautiful response to grace. Although they might have been undeserving, these men knew they could approach Jesus. We will fail and miss the mark at times as well, but He longs for us to come to Him. Many times, He stands near the shore as we journey through life, calling out to us. In those moments, we must do as the disciples did, recognizing Jesus and drawing near to Him! Our failures are not final, and He wants to restore our faith.

Conclusion: In the following verses, Jesus invited the men to come and dine upon a meal He had prepared for them. There was no need to ask who He was because the disciples were certain they stood in the presence of Jesus. Their night of discouragement had turned to joy and hope.

You may be struggling today as the disciples were. You may have wandered from the Lord, questioning if you will be able to continue. Jesus stands today, calling you unto Himself. Respond to Him and receive the blessing He has provided. If you have yet to respond in salvation, He invites you to come today in repentance and faith. Come as He is calling!