Questions for HGs on John 21vv1-14 (‘A day to remember’)

**Getting going**

1. How firmly do you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?
2. What difference does it make to your life, practically speaking, that Jesus rose, and appeared to his disciples?

*Today we’re going to learn some lessons those first disciples learned from one of Jesus’ appearances to them, post his resurrection. These are recorded in the Bible for the benefit of all future generations of Christians, us included. Please read the passage….*

**Into the text**

1. How do you view Peter’s decision to go fishing at night? Was this merely a thoroughly sensible decision, or something that should attract our surprise, even criticism?
2. What might the fact that this expedition took place ‘at night’ suggest about Peter’s understanding (see eg John 3v2)?
3. What do you think is significant about the failure of this fishing trip? How might the last part of John 15v6 summarise a warning Jesus wants to give us? How much do you/ does St Margaret’s need this warning?
4. What does the miraculous catch of fish reveal to at least one of the disciples (v7) as to who this stranger on the beach is? Why might have led to that conclusion ( see Luke 5vv1-11)?
5. What does this incident reveal about the significance of Jesus to the ongoing ministry and fruitfulness of disciples? (see John 15v5 and vv7-8) To what extent have you already learned that lesson?
6. Many people have seen significance in the activity of ‘fishing’ here. Why do you think this may be the case (see Luke 5v10)? What do you think might be importance of the detail that despite the huge catch of fish, the net remained untorn (v11)? Do you need this encouragement in terms of your fishing for Jesus?
7. The incident finishes with breakfast on the beach (vv9-13). What does this indicate about the sort of LORD Jesus continues to be, post his resurrection? How precious a picture is this to you? When is this ultimately fulfilled (see Revelation 19vv6-9)?

**MOVING TO PRAYER**

1. **What has struck you most from this encounter with the risen Jesus?**

* Maybe the warning about not doing things in our own strength?
* Or, the encouragement that the risen Lord Jesus’ word enables us to become fruitful for him;
* Or, the thrill of deep, personal, ongoing fellowship with Jesus?

~ Maybe all 3 of them? Why not include them in your prayers one for another….

‘A day to remember’

John 21vv1-14

I wonder if there’s **one** day that is lodged in your memory bank as a really special one?

For those alive in 1945, the 8th May is such a day as they celebrated the end of a world war (Image of crowds on VE Day)

Well today, we’re going to hear about **another** special day, a day when the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples. This day is recorded in the Bible for **our** benefit, so we can see what life with Jesus in our midst will be like. So come to our passage, John 21v1-14 (p1090) with high levels of expectation…

It has to be said though that the day didn’t start well (!) so let’s look first at

1. A frustrating night on the water

After all the drama at Jerusalem, Jesus’ disciples have now returned to Galilee.

Peter decides to go on a night-time fishing trip, and 6 other disciples go with him.

Some people are rather surprised that they do this, thinking it rather strange that people who’ve seen the risen Jesus should revert to their previous trade. Others, more charitably, say that we should ‘cut them some slack’, because – after all- they had to eat….

We should note though that this fishing trip happened at night, and that is probably significant, for John in his gospel often suggests that **darkness** reflects a degree of **inner** darkness, as shown by Nicodemus approaching Jesus at night, and Judas going off into the darkness to betray Jesus.

So, this night-time fishing expedition suggests a degree of spiritual darkness in the minds of the disciples. Though they had already seen and heard the risen Jesus, they hadn’t really grasped the full implications of what this all means. They were, to a degree, still ‘in the dark’

And so when we hear that their fishing trip was a complete flop, catching nothing (image of a fisherman and an empty net), we are meant to learn an important lesson, one summed up by some words of Jesus on a previous occasion

‘Apart from me, you can do nothing’

If disciples of Jesus attempt any activity in our **own strength**, and guided by our **own wisdom**, then the results of what we do is likely to be as fruitless as the men’s fishing expedition that night!

We need to ensure that we look to Jesus, listening to and trusting him in our **lives** and in the **ministry plans** of the Church. Otherwise, we may well end up looking at ‘empty nets’ in terms of results…..

# I wonder if we need to feel the force of this warning today? People who are competent and successful in worldly terms, who feel we can do anything, often need to heed this loving warning!

But let’s move on to the 2nd act of this dramatic day. Let’s look next at (2) A marvellous catch at dawn

V4 moves the action on to early morning, and a mysterious stranger speaks to the fishermen. ‘*Friends, haven’t you any fish*?’ he says. ‘No!’ they reply, doubtless with a grimace on their faces!

Then, this stranger gives them some advice. ‘*Throw out your lines to the right hand side of the boat, and you will find some’*

Our text doesn’t record any salty reply from the men who were experienced fisherman, but we can perhaps imagine the thoughts going through their minds!!

But, perhaps thinking they had nothing to lose, they follow the stranger’s instructions and then immediately such a large number of fish are caught that they are unable to haul it into the boat. (Image of a fishing net teeming with fish)

We can imagine their tired eyes popping with amazement at the sight of the net that had been empty now bulging with large fish.

What could this **mean**? Well, for at least one of them, it seems to trigger a vivid memory from the past. Towards the start of Jesus’ ministry, there had been a very similar incident. After a night of total frustration, without a single fish being caught, Jesus tells them to drop down the nets again, and so many fish are caught that the nets begin to break.

And so, it’s probably no surprise that one of the disciples NOW says of the mysterious stranger on the shore ‘**It is the Lord’** and this makes Peter jump into the water so he can get to Jesus.

So, what is this 2nd miraculous catch of fish there to teach us?

I think we can learn at least 2 lessons- one that is **general**, and the other more **specific**

The **general** lesson is simply this :- *Jesus enables his disciples to be fruitful rather than fruitless****’***

It was the appearance of Jesus on the scene, speaking to his disciples and them listening and obeying that has turned empty nets into full nets.

You know, this really shouldn’t surprise us, for Jesus’ word has **ALWAYS** been powerful….

* It was through Jesus, the very Word of God, that the world was **created**.
* It was through Jesus’ word that disciples were called, crowds taught, individuals healed, evil spirits expelled and the dead raised…
* The risen Jesus is still speaking, and listening and heeding to those words is the key to **fruitfulness**…

Listen to how Jesus explained all this to his disciples the night before his death….

‘If you remain in me, and my words remain in you,

Ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you.

This is to my father’s glory, that you bear much fruit,

Showing yourselves to be my disciples.’

If we want- as I’m sure we do- to be faithful and fruitful disciples of Jesus, the good news of this passage is that we **CAN** be, for Jesus is raised from the dead, and still speaking to us through his powerful, life-changing, destiny-determining Word. Isn’t that wonderful?

But this general lesson does seem to me to have a very **specific** application as well

For it is surely significant that the particular activity that Jesus helps his disciples with is **fishing.** For in that earlier incident, Jesus had said to the disciples that from now on they will catch not fish, but people….

In now granting a huge catch of fish, Jesus is surely indicating that his Church will be enabled to have a really fruitful mission if only she will listen to Jesus ‘the Lord of the Catch’ as it were, and to heed his direction.

There’s one detail - recorded in v11 – that I have found really encouraging. We’re told that the net wasn’t broken **despite** the 153 fish in it. Surely this is designed to encourage the Church of each generation to see that the gospel net will **never** break, and there is no limit to the number of people that can be dragged out of the sea of unbelief, and into the net of faith in Jesus Christ….

Maybe you and I need this reminder today - that there is no lack of power in the risen Jesus to bring people into the nets of the gospel lowered regularly energetically and prayerful by his people. One day, as the book of Revelation puts it, there will be a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the God who is Father Son and Spirit in Heaven.

Our Church Council reflected last Monday on the recent Lent course which encouraged us to recommit ourselves to the priority of soul wining , or perhaps with today’s passage in mind, we could also call this activity ‘fishing’. Let’s be encouraged to keep fishing for Jesus, praying for those friends on our hearts, for our church’s ministry locally, and for the Churches ministry globally asking that Jesus – the ‘Lord of the Catch’ – might gather many, many people into the net of his Church..

Well let’s see how that special day ended, v9. It was with (3) A breakfast on the beach

As the 6 disciples rejoined Peter on the beach, they saw a BBQ in front of them, with fish on the barbie, and some bread there. (Image of a BBQ)

Then they heard Jesus’ voice encouraging them to bring some of the fish with them, and then inviting them warmly ‘Come and have some breakfast.’

It must have been a strange sight for them, Jesus with apron on and tongs in hand, getting a meal ready for them, but what an important insight this is for them…

The Jesus who had served them to the uttermost, even washing their feet before surrendering his body on a Cross to feed their souls with forgiveness and peace was **still** their servant king, beckoning them to come to him, enjoy sweet fellowship with him, giving them all they need to sustain their bodies and their souls.

This meal is a special one, for it vividly pictures the intimate relationship that Jesus wants his disciples to have with him **NOW,** and in the **FUTURE.**

One of the parables Jesus had taught them spoke of a Master, who returns and serves his servants, waiting on them, providing for their needs. This simple BBQ breakfast is a foretaste of the care and honour Jesus will give to his people. It’s a foretaste of the wedding banquet the Father will give to celebrate the union of Jesus, the bridegroom, and his people, the bride, in Heaven.

* We enjoy this meal **now,** to a degree, and is what Communion represents
* We **look forward** to the banquet we will enjoy in Heaven- glorious, intimate, eternal
* We **pass on** to others the good news that Jesus wants them to accept his gracious invitation to this meal.

What a blessed people we are….

We may never be invited to a grand reception at Buckingham Palace, to meet and be welcomed by the King.

But we have an invitation that is **even better** :to be **with** Jesus -the King of Kings- now and forever, and to be used in his service fishing for him until that great day he returns from Heaven and takes his people home

[Prayer]