

## **THE MESSAGE**

**September 12, 2010**

**John 21:1-14**

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*Hungry?*

Can you think of at least one memorable meal you've had? Maybe you remember it because of the food, or because of the people who you had eaten it with, or maybe it was the place, or maybe something special happened during that meal.

I can think of lots of memorable meals.

I remember growing up and having Thanksgiving dinner with our extended family with turkey and ham and mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes and green beans and coleslaw and pies and pies and pies and cookies and cake and... I mean, it was food galore. The kind of meal; that if you left the table hungry, it was your own fault. We would stuff ourselves. You've been there right? We would stuff ourselves and then sit around complaining about how stuffed we were. We would say, "I can't eat another bite until after New Years'." But a couple hours later I would have another piece of pie.

We have memorable meals.

I remember as a kid growing up and my dad taking me to the church around Easter time for a men's oyster and fish fry. Oh... were those fun meals we would share. I can remember the place. I can remember all the people around me. I was only five or six at the time.

I remember a special meal that I shared in a special restaurant with Amber about 30 miles from here in Lancaster, the night I proposed to her. Can I have an awe???  
Thank you!

I remember having meals at my sister's farm these last couple years. We would get-together as a family every Saturday, Labor Day weekend. What a great time that is with laughter and fun and connecting as a family.

I'm sure we all have memorable meals that we can recall. Meals do more than just feed us physically. Meals feed our spirits, don't they?

During the three years that Jesus was with his disciples they shared many memorable meals. I can think of a few of them.

- There was the wedding feast in Cana where Jesus turned water into wine. How could you forget that meal?
- There was the party at Matthew's house where Jesus was accused of eating with tax collectors and sinners. How can you forget that meal?

- There was that little picnic on the hill, where Jesus and his disciples took a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish and fed over 5000 people on the hillside that day. How can you forget that meal?
- And then there was the meal during the Passover where Jesus took that bread and wine called it his body and blood and instituted what we call “Holy Communion.” A meal we still share to this very day as disciples of Christ.

There were many, many memorable meals that Jesus shared with his disciples. And the meal we just read about is one such memorable meal.

It’s some time after Jesus’ death and resurrection. This is the third time Jesus appears to his disciples. So we’re told. The disciples have returned to the Sea of Tiberias, (A.K.A. Sea of Galilee). Maybe they go there because Jesus said he would meet them there. Or maybe because of all the turmoil they had experienced over the past week or so with Jesus’ passion and death on the cross. Maybe they needed to go back to something familiar and comfortable.

Whatever the reason, the disciples decided to go fishing but they didn’t go fishing for fun like we tend to do. They went fishing to provide food, for an income. It was work. They went back to work. They went back to the mundane; they went back to what they knew they could do. Maybe because they didn’t know what else to do?

Have you ever gone fishing and caught absolutely nothing?

A friend of mine loves to go fishing whenever he can. He says that he just loves being out in God’s great outdoors and if he catches fish well that’s a bonus. If I called him right now he would probably be out fishing somewhere.

But that approach doesn’t work with these fishermen, these disciples of Jesus. This was their livelihood. No fish, no income.

Imagine their frustration for a moment. They’ve been at this all night long. Throwing the nets in and hauling them in, throwing the nets in and hauling them in... And each time the nets are empty, all night long. Imagine their frustration. Things had not gone the way they had envisioned. Let me say that again. Things had not gone the way they had envisioned. Has that ever happened to you?

Imagine being a professional fisherman. You know what you are doing. But all night long you caught nothing.

My son, Simon, and I love to watch the TV show “Deadliest Catch.” Do you know what I’m talking about here? Where they are fishing in really rough waters and it’s amazing to me that when they don’t catch something; boy do they get frustrated. Don’t they? They turn on one another. They get mean and nasty and ugly. Don’t they? I’m so glad they bleep out the words, for my sake; and for Simon’s sake, of course.

The disciples were having that kind of night. To make matters worse, some stranger about a football field's length away on the shore calls out to them – the obvious, “Hey guys, no fish. Huh?” “Oh... you...” Can you see them in the boat? Who does this joker think he is? “No we didn't get any fish!?!?” And then, he has the audacity, this stranger on the beach is telling them how to fish. This stranger on the beach... who obviously is not a professional fisherman or he would be out fishing. Wouldn't he? And he says to them, “Throw the net on the right side of the boat. And you will find fish.” A stranger... They're tired. They're cranky. They're frustrated. They're hungry...

What would you have done?

Oddly enough, the disciples do exactly what the stranger tells them to do. They cast their nets on the right side of the boat, and the catch is so great that they can't even bring the nets of fish into the boat. They realize at that very moment, I don't know how they did it, but they realized at that moment this stranger on the beach telling them what to do is Jesus. It is the Lord!

And for some strange reason Peter decides not to wait for the rest of them. He decides to put on his clothes, jump into the water and swim. Just stay in the boat Peter, come on! Just go with the rest of them, right? Noooooo.... He's got to be first. We know how Peter is.

They all get to the beach and there is Jesus with a charcoal fire and breakfast with one fish and one loaf. In the Greek its singular, one fish and one loaf for Jesus and seven hungry disciples.

Jesus tells the fisherman to go secure the fish before breakfast... not to supplement breakfast, no... Jesus is telling them, like any wise fisherman. “You better take care of the fish. They are still in the net, in the water, they might get away. Bring them to shore, secure them. And then we will eat breakfast.”

I believe this is an important point for us to consider. The point is here Jesus miraculously provides for his disciples, feeding so many, so well, with so little. He is making this a memorable meal they will never forget; a meal where Jesus fills their stomachs and their souls. Jesus provides for their way of life. With Jesus, picture this with Jesus the disciples are no longer tired, no longer cranky, no longer frustrated, no longer hungry...

I believe God longs to satisfy those deeper hungers in our lives too. And I believe this story reveals three hungers that God provides for us here today.

### **First, Jesus feeds our hunger for his presence.**

Don't we all hunger for God's presence in our lives? Jesus meets the disciples where they are. And Jesus meets us exactly where we are, wherever that is. As disciples

we are hungry to feel Jesus presence in our lives, aren't we? I know I am. Not just here on Sunday morning, I mean every day of our lives, don't we?

I don't know about you but so often, I just... "Just give me a burning bush, Lord. Or speak to me through some bolt of lightning, huh? Show me some sign that you're in my life!" But that's not how Jesus or God works.

I've come to learn that God comes to us more in whispers. As we're reading scripture or sharing that with others or sitting quietly in worship or listening to a song or God speaking through a message or where we take a little piece of bread and a simple sip of wine and we know that we are forgiven sinners.

I'm fascinated that the disciples are obedient to this stranger even before they recognize who he is. He tells them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, and they listen to him. They're doing the unthinkable, folks. Jesus often calls us to do the unthinkable -- where ordinary obedience leads to extraordinary things with Jesus in our lives.

Let me be clear here. I am not saying that Jesus isn't active in the lives of those who are disobedient. Otherwise he would never be in any of our lives! But here is what I've come to find out – I am more aware of Jesus' presence when I do my best to live according to his ways – to truly be his disciple 24/7/365 by loving God and loving others.

**Jesus feeds our hunger for his presence.**

**Second, Jesus feeds our hunger for purpose.**

In 2002, Pastor Rick Warren from Saddleback Community Church in California published a book entitled *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Some people loved it, others called it heresy. Either way, the book has sold over 30 million copies, making it one of the best-selling books in history. I read it myself and some of you have too. It reveals to me that people hunger for a purpose, don't we? Why are we here?

Our story today is about fishing. It's also about Jesus' calling his disciples not to go fishing for fun but to go fishing for people. It started three years earlier, and here now they begin this new chapter in their lives to go fishing for people without Jesus presence, physically.

The miraculous catch of fish in John's Gospel I believe reveals to us that, if we cast the net of God's unconditional love into the waters of this world, where we live and work and play, by God's grace, people will be caught up in the transforming love that is ours in Christ Jesus. We are called to be fishing for people. No matter who you are, no matter what stage of life, no matter your vocation, no matter what gifts or experience you bring to this community of faith, God has a purpose for your life. And that purpose involves loving God and loving others. It's as simple and as difficult as that.

**Jesus feeds our hunger for his presence.**

**Jesus feeds our hunger for purpose.**

**And, Jesus feeds our hunger for provision.**

As this story points out -- Jesus provides. With him a little is a lot, have you noticed that? His disciples are filled up with just one fish and one loaf of bread. And we are filled up with one little piece of bread and little sip of the fruit of the vine.

Consider this: if you're like me, you already have more than you possible need, don't you? We have daily bread, and we have pantries and freezers and refrigerators filled with enough food for weeks! God provides. God graciously and lovingly provides for our needs. We are invited to share with others, to share our blessing with others...

That's what Paul taught the disciples in Corinth. He wrote,

“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”

That's why we practice generosity here at Friedens. That's why we bring food regularly for our outreach ministry to Lebanon Christian Ministries. I am always amazed when we do that and the bags of food sitting outside the church office for that ministry. I want to personally thank everyone who generously donates these food items. Thank you, thank you, thank you! It's a way for us to share our blessings with others.

Maybe you're here today and you don't have enough. Maybe you are still hungry in some way. In that case, let God provide. God longs to meet our needs in and through the church. Maybe that's why our fellowship time between the two services has grown so much -- where we get a little food and a lot of fellowship to feed us physically and spiritually.

The truth is all of us are hungry in some way. Even if our stomachs are full, there are hungers within us that run deep to the core of who we are; a hunger for presence, a hunger for purpose, a hunger for provision.

So if you're here today and you're hungry -- listen to Jesus. He provides. He is the Bread of Life to feed us. He is Living Water to quench our thirst.

You know? Now that I think about it. I'll leave you with this thought. With Jesus... with Jesus every day is a memorable meal. Is it not? Amen.