

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³“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.

⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

⁶He 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.

⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.^[c] ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Trolled

A troll is internet slang for someone who makes controversial comments on forums with the intent to provoke a reaction or to engage in an argument online. In some ways it can be fun to give obviously wrong advice for sake of getting someone to stop and think. Then again, sometimes it’s increasingly frustrating, such as when you are in an argument with the IT department and suddenly realize, “They’re right...I haven’t tried turning off and on again, in fact it’s been a month since I last restarted.” And yet long before the internet. Long before the term troll was coined. Jesus seems to troll Peter while Peter is out trolling for fish.

Just look at the words of wisdom that came from his mouth, “Have you tried the right side of the boat?” You can almost imagine Peter muttering under his breath after a long night of catching nothing, “Have you tried the other side of the boat? Why didn’t I think of that? Guys... we’ve been fishing off the wrong side of the boat.”

The point wasn't to agitate and upset but make them think back to another time when he received some unsolicited advice on fishing. At this moment the disciples probably thought the cross, the resurrection, was the end. God has something very different in mind for his apostles. It involves rejoicing, proclaiming a risen LORD, and realizing that he will provide food that the disciples knew nothing about.

Sometimes it feels like everything can go wrong all in one week and the very best thing we can do is go fishing. A stranger may not ask if we have any food, tell us to fish off the other side of the boat (some have boats others don't and still more don't want them) but we do have brothers and sisters in Christ who are often quite sarcastic and occasionally troll us. Sometimes to agitate and instigate but often for the very same purpose: think. Even in the worst of moments God has provided food for us, food that comes from unlikely sources; even trolls.

Sometime has past since the upper room. We're not sure how long it has been. It just says *After these things*. What things? Jesus appeared to the women and told them, *"Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me."* Jesus appeared to the disciples, a week later Jesus appears to Thomas and the rest. Having seen the resurrected Christ – you'd think that they'd go for the gusto – sail the seas and proclaim peace to all people. Not what we see. Instead they seem disappointed, back in Galilee, they're just waiting, sitting around, wondering, "Now what? What are we doing? What has happened? Peter must have wondered if it was all over for him. He has not right to resume preaching. It was fun while it lasted but having denied Jesus, it's over. Peter then gets back to work doing what he does best: fishing, *"I'm going out to fish,"* in other words *anyone want to join me? They said, "We'll go with you."* Some people are certain that they can find a spiritual experience on the water while fishing. But this wasn't it. This isn't just a quick grab your pole and sit around in a boat kind of fishing. This was the grunt work of 9-5 of trying to make a living after apostleship. This is commercial fishing. They grab their nets and cast them off the side of the boat at night in search for fish.

"But that night they caught nothing." They're not even good fishermen anymore. They can't do anything right. They can't even catch fish. They're tired. It's been a long night. They've been on an emotional roller coaster and they're not sure what's going to happen next. All they know is that Jesus isn't with them on a daily basis like he used to be and they don't know what to do. That's when they hear a voice, about a football field away, *"Children, haven't you any food?"* "No," they answered. Then the advice comes from the distance, *"Throw your net on the right (true) side of the boat and you will find some."* Have you tried the other side of the boat?

Any other day, at any other time, and that troll would have been shut down. They're experience fisherman. They can see what is going on at the boat much better than someone standing on the shore. It never worked for me as a child. If my brother was catching fish, I'd jump to the other side of the boat and it didn't work then so why now? But they began to remember something that happened years ago on another night when they didn't catch a thing. They should have known. Jesus called to them after the nets had been washed, *"Let them down in the deep."* And

here without protesting *they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*” It was a new day. And the troll turned out to be true to his Word. The IT got it right without upsetting anyone. It’s a miracle.

Life can be just as frustrating for us. We don’t have Jesus walking among us, healing everything that ails us, but Jesus didn’t heal every sick person in Israel either. If Jesus were still physically with us, I doubt we’d get a glimpse of him and his celebrity status. But it can be just as frustrating because so much time has gone by. Thought that it was going to be a quick return for Jesus and yet he’s still not here. Our praises have turned from proclamation of our coming King and proclaiming his worth to questioning, “We’ve been living with his resurrection for almost 2000 years, still waiting and wondering, “When will he come?”

There is work to do. There are people who still haven’t heard and don’t know what God has done. There is still the matter of feeding your faith so you can feed others. And yet we often neglect his word and the hearing of it, his word, his work, his service, and then act as if it doesn’t matter. After all the problems of life can get us down. When we become so focused on ourselves and what we can do we forget whose we are and what he has promised us.

Jesus has told us what we are to be doing, “Proclaim peace. Let them know it is finished. *Rejoice, be glad, yours is the kingdom of God.*” But we are often so caught up with what we can’t do our limitations that we don’t do anything. When we focus on our efforts and only see ourselves we fail to take into account the most powerful person who cares for his, who controls madmen and even brings them into his kingdom, he will provide for his church, for you and me – to accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. There is work to do but... It would be stretching the lesson to say, “Sell your boats. You shouldn’t ever go fishing. We just can’t have any fun or downtime. You should always be busy. No fun. Nothing but work.” Jesus didn’t say any of that... he just said fish off the right side of the boat.

And no he isn’t trolling. This is not for the purpose of inciting hate and anger – but pointing us back to himself, grabbing our attention, making us think. Because this wasn’t about fish. It was about food. Food they weren’t even thinking about.

Jesus speaks the Word, a command which is followed by a promise. “*Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.*” The command, “Throw your net on the right side... the true side.” There is a promise, “*You will find some.*” The nets begin to fill. John thinks faster than Peter acts, he puts two and two together. This happened the first time he called us to fish for people. John couldn’t keep it in, “*It’s the Lord.*” Peter springs to action, puts on his outer garment before jumping into the Sea of Galilee. He doesn’t care about the fish. He knows that stranger could be Jesus. He wants to see Jesus. Instead of telling Jesus, “*Depart from me for I am a sinner.*” Peter knows his sin, from an unfaithful disciple who does not know Jesus, to a disciple who doesn’t want to be

known apart from him. He swims to this stranger. The boat was going to be a while hauling in 153 fish.

But it doesn't matter how many they've caught. Jesus has food they don't even know about. Fish are already over coals when they come to shore. He even allows them to contribute with the gifts that he gives. This isn't just breakfast this is a mission. There is something to do a field ripe for the harvest. Jesus reinstates Peter publically. He is called once again to, "*Make disciples of all nations... baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*" He feeds them and brings them into the ministry of God. My food is to accomplish the work of him who sent me. Jesus had a larger mission. Announce that Kingdom has come. Christ has risen. He has appeared. Not even death can hold him. He builds confidence. He provides food. He even sends disciples.

Jesus speaks his Word, we hear his command and it comes with a promise. *My word will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.* God allows us to participate in growing his kingdom. We have the Great Commission as well. Baptizing and teaching is how the fishing is done – by adopting souls into the kingdom of God and helping souls grow by feeding them with the truth of Scripture: the word of God. That is a privilege, not a burden. Jesus resurrection announces a victory. Though we're weak and do things we deeply regret, sin

The risen Lord still appears with food we didn't even know about. In Lord's Supper he gives his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. He wants us to rush to him not run from him. He wants us to realize what a gracious and forgiving God we have. Then we aren't alone. God blesses the harvest. It may not be something spectacular to look at but God allows us to bring our time, talents, insights, and passions to put them to work in his church.

You can even use humor, sarcasm, trolling, as long as you are understood. You can even use fishes, new boats, old boats, new to you boats but this isn't just about fishing advice or technique. Christ has come. Sometimes he stirred the pot and agitated people but he wasn't a troll trying to fool internet users into responding, he isn't aiming to upset and worry he only wants us to stop and think: recall and remember his work, his service to us.