



Sermon – April 29, 2018  
Dr. Deron Biles

**Verses Covered**

*John 21:1 - 14*

Well good morning. It's a delight to be back with you this morning. If you have your Bible, let me invite you to turn with me to the Gospel of John, chapter 21. While you're turning there, let me say a word of thanks to you on behalf of Southwestern Seminary. You are in partnership with Southwestern in international missions. And I just want to say a word of thanks to you for how you are reaching the world with the message of the gospel. I had the opportunity this week to see some pictures of a Bible institute in the Cayman Islands who has been benefited from the direct work of Central Baptist Church. And so I want to thank you for your commitment to missions. It's a great time to be a part of Central Baptist Church. I got here early, got a chance to see the new children's building. It is awesome. So excited to be here and see what God is doing through your ministry. I am proud to know of your commitment to God's word.

I don't know if you saw the GQ article this week. Article came out early this week. About 21 books that you don't need to read. One of those that they listed is the Bible. A book that they say you don't need to read. Essentially the fashion magazine did not find reading the Bible to be fashionable. They suggested if you want to read a good story about people getting along, you should read the Notebook or something like that. But as I was reading that story, here's the thought that came to me that they have fundamentally misunderstood. In fact, many of those who responded to this article have still missed what is the obviousness of the obvious. God did not write His word for your entertainment. God wrote His word for your inspiration. God declared His message to reveal Himself to you and to reveal us to ourselves.

So this morning Jesus will meet the disciples at the point of their need. He will reveal Himself to them in an unusual way and yet throughout the story, John goes out of his way to remind us of the central truth of the message. It is about Jesus. Let me set the scene for you. The disciples, after the resurrection of Jesus, have seen Jesus already on two occasions. But now some time has passed and Peter, for whatever reason, decides he's going to go fishing. And some of the disciples go with him. They've fished all night; caught nothing. And in the morning as the sun just begins to peep over the sides of the mountain on the Sea of Galilea, the disciples hear a voice from a man on the shore who gives them instructions on fishing. John records the story this way in John 21.

<sup>1</sup>After this Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, He revealed Himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas called The Twin, Nathanael from Cana of Galilea, Zebedee's sons, and two others of His disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>"I'm going fishing." Simon Peter said to them. "We're coming with you." They told him and they went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup>When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't know it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>"Friends," Jesus called out to them, "You don't have any fish do you?" "No." They answered. <sup>6</sup>"Cast your net on the right side of the boat." He told them. "And you will find them, find some." So they did. They were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish. <sup>7</sup>And the disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer clothing around him for he'd taken it off, plunged into the sea. <sup>8</sup>And since they were not far from land, about 100 yards away, the other disciples came in the boat dragging the net full of fish.

<sup>9</sup>When they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish laying on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>"Bring some of the fish that you just caught." Jesus told them. <sup>11</sup>So Simon Peter climbed up and hauled the net ashore full of large fish, 153 of them; even though there were so many, the net was not torn.

<sup>12</sup>"Come and have breakfast." Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>Now this was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

We're near the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Near the end of the time that Jesus had set aside to mature these disciples. This is something of a final exam for them, if you will. Which reminds me. Some of you, this week, will be forced to face the decision of going to see the new Marvels movie or cramming, studying, for your final exams. Now I don't know how that's going to work for you in your classroom. But I want to suggest to you it doesn't work that way in our relationship with the Lord. Because you can't cram holiness. You'll never gain in one large leap, what it takes a lifetime of small steps to achieve.

Did you see the story about the bridge that collapsed on March 16<sup>th</sup>? It was near Florida International University. Catastrophic bridge collapse. Six people lost their lives. Two day before the bridge collapsed, one of the engineers left a voicemail saying there were some cracks in the bridge. As I was reading the story, I learned about something that I really was unfamiliar with. The process by which they'd built the bridge is a process called Accelerated Bridge Construction. It's a process by which they built much of the bridge off-site so that it saves them time and undoubtedly resources when they actually construct the bridge on location. Now I don't know if it was the accelerated bridge construction process that actually led to this tragedy, but I know in our lives, you can't rush maturity. It's going to take time for you and for me to grow in our relationship with the Lord. It's going to take time for the Lord to do in us what pleases Him. John already said in the last verse of John, chapter 20, Jesus performed many other things that are not recorded in this book. These things are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. And that believing you might have life in His name. These things are written for

you to believe. And John records one last sign Jesus did. It's an unusual sign. In fact, what's unusual about this particular sign, is the location. Jesus has already revealed Himself to these disciples two other times. Those two times were both in the upper room. That was the place where Jesus had celebrated the last supper with His disciples. So it's not unusual Jesus would meet them in the upper room. The upper room was a place of worship. On this occasion, Jesus didn't meet them in the synagogue, He didn't meet them in the upper room, He met them on the shore of the sea. At first when Jesus came to the shore, the disciples didn't recognize Him. They didn't know it was Him. And so they rubbed their eyes and they hear the voice of the man calling out from a distance giving them instructions on how to do what they had trained a lifetime to do.

Here's the story. They've been fishing all night. I've never fished in the Sea of Galilee, but I suspect that there's something more than just the absence of fish in this particular story. They fished all night. Now bear in mind they are professional fishermen. It's a little embarrassing to have fished all night and caught nothing. And then to hear the voice of a strange man on the shore telling them the reason you don't have fish is you are fishing on the wrong side of the boat. I'm not particularly sure how wide this boat was. Maybe it's 10 feet wide. Maybe it's 12 feet wide. But however wide this boat must have been, it's not that far from this side of the boat to that side of the boat. And here's this man on the shore instructing these professional fishermen to fish on the other side. Now somewhere in this story, I suspect something started to sound familiar. Because they've been here before. Early in Jesus' earthly ministry, Luke records in Luke chapter 5 a very similar scene. The disciples had fished all night and they caught nothing. One this occasion they had taken their boat back to shore. Jesus was preparing to teach the multitudes, got into the boat, and said, "I want you to catch, I want you to cast your net on the other side." And they objected and said, "Lord we fished all night and caught nothing." Nevertheless, at Your word, they caught a great catch. Now fast forward three years to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and again they've fished all night and they have caught nothing. And the irony is thick in the story. These professional fishermen, who have fished all night, caught nothing. And a strange man on the shore instructs them on how to fish. After doing so, they catch a great catch of fish, drag the fish to shore, only to discover Jesus already has fish. And you begin to process the story that there's something here that's more than just catching fish. Well John's told you. In fact, John actually tells us five times what the story is about. You see it twice in verse 1. You see it again in verse 7. You see it again in verse 12. You see it again in verse 14. Here's what John is saying. This story is not about fishing. It's not about boats. It's not about nets. It's about Jesus. Look what John said.

#### <sup>1</sup>After this, Jesus revealed Himself

In fact, he says it again at the end of verse 1. Jesus revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed Himself in this way. Now what's John saying? This is the story of Jesus revealing Himself. It's not a story on how to catch fish. It's not a story of the correct side of the boat on which to cast your net. It is a story about Jesus revealing Himself. In the context of the story we discover it's all about Him. And here's what we learned from the story. If it's all about Him, then it's not about you. If it's all about Jesus, then it's not about our recognition. It's not about what we do. It's not about who we are. It's about Him. Now everyone loves recognition. It begins on your mother's refrigerator, but it doesn't end there. Everybody loves your name in the story. But there's something intriguing about this particular story. Did you see it in the story

when I read it? There are seven disciples who are there. And John recounts some of them. Look what the Bible says: Simon Peter, this is verse 2. Simon Peter; that's one. Thomas; that's two. Nathanael; that's three. The sons of Zebedee, that's James and John, four and five. And then John, for whatever reason, summarizes the rest of those who are there. So we've got Peter, we've got Thomas, we've got Nathanael, we've got James and John, and two others. Now there's only 11 disciples at this point. Judas betrayed Jesus; went out and hanged himself. So there's only 11. By process of elimination, we can pretty well narrow down who this probably is. But that's really somewhat irrelevant to the story. Because John doesn't tell us. Did John forget the details of the story? Did John somehow overlook these two other guys. "Let's see there was me, James, Peter, Nathanael, Thomas, and I don't know, a couple other guys." Is that what's going on here? Two other guys. There are two other guys who didn't get their name in the story. It's the remarkable scene of this particular episode, there's only 11 disciples, five of them are named, and two other guys who are part of this group, but their names are not recorded in the story.

Have you ever done something great, but you didn't get recognized for it? Has that ever happened to you? It happened to me one time. It was back when I was serving at the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention. It was right about the time in 2005 when Hurricane Rita hit, that devastated the area of Southeast Texas. I was directed by our Executive Director to take a team to Southeast Texas. And so meeting me there was the president of the Southern Baptist Convention at the time, the president of the executive committee at the time, and we went to this region that was most devastated in Southeast Texas. We met there with the pastor and as we were meeting, a helicopter landed not far from where we are and the president of a relief organization from Houston, Someone Cares Houston, came and there's a huddle of us right before this prayer meeting Bobby Welch led. Standing around me, Bobby Welch, who's the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Morris Chapman, who's the president of the executive committee, this gentleman who is the president of Someone Cares Houston, and me. My friend who at the time was a photographer for the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention was there. And he was capturing the scene. He was taking a picture. And that picture went what was that generations version of viral. It was all over the executive committee website, SBTC posted that picture all over their website, Southern Baptist Convention posted that picture all over their website. The only problem was, my friend who took the picture, cropped me out. I don't know why. He never explained. But somehow in this famous picture, the most famous picture I think I've ever been in, you can't tell that I'm in. If you look very closely at the picture, you can see a shadow on Morris Chapman's shoulder of where I was standing. And you'll just have to take my word for it that I was there because you don't know. And here's what the Lord told me or taught me through that episode. It's not about me. Hebrews chapter 11 gives us the roll call of the faithful and the writer of Hebrews delineates 17 names in the story. He goes through them, first of all, in great detail. And then as he gets to what is the end of the allotted space that he has, he just begins to rattle off some names and if I had some time, I'd tell you more about Jephthah and Samson and David and Barak and Gideon, all the great things that he did. And then he gets to the end of that story and he's not yet done, because he's still got more that he wants to tell about all of these individuals.

<sup>35</sup>Women who received back the dead, raised to life, and other people who were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might get a better resurrection; <sup>36</sup>others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonments. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned, they

were sawn in two, died by the sword, wandering in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, mistreated<sup>38</sup>(men of whom the world was not worthy),

And you read the story of these individuals who are destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, and anonymous who did these marvelous things. They were men of whom the world was not worthy. They were commended, but not identified. Faithfulness to Jesus did not bring them notoriety. It didn't get their name in the story because here's what the Bible is reminding us from time to time. It's not about you. Revelation of Jesus overshadows the obscurity of the two unknown fishermen because John is reminding us it's not about you; it's about Him. Well if it's not about me; it's about Him. But if it's all about Him, then John tells us not only is it not about you, it's not about your plan, it's not about what you decide, it's not about what you think is important, it's about His plan for you. Jesus stands on the shore; they've not yet identified who is this strange man on the shore giving them instructions. And He essentially says to them, "Have you caught any fish?" "No we haven't caught any fish." "Why don't you try to do it my way?" Maybe you've had that moment in your walk with the Lord where you exhausted all of the efforts that you have. You've done everything you know to do and all of a sudden you hear whispering in your ear or shouting from the pages of Scripture, the Lord speaking to you, "Why don't you try it My way?" May I suggest to you His way is what's recorded in His word. His way is what God has already instructed to us. Now I don't know what the disciples plan included, but you can be sure their plan did not include fishing all night and catching nothing.

I've often wondered why Peter jumped in the water. It's a little unfair. John who was the first to identify Jesus says, "That's the Lord." Peter jumps into the water, swims a hundred yards to shore, and he leaves everybody else to do the work. I mean it's the other six who are dragging the net. It's so heavy they can't even get this net full of fish into the boat. So they're just rowing the boat, dragging the net all the way to shore. And Peter just swims to Jesus. Remember that scene, Lazarus' house, Mary and Martha are there and Jesus came for dinner. Martha, the matriarch of the home, is distracted by all of the preparations, the cooking, the dinner, and all the things. And Mary was there at the feet of Jesus. After a while, Martha gets so frustrated, she says to Jesus, "Will you please direct Mary to come help me?" Jesus said, "Martha you're worried about a lot of things." But in this moment, only one thing matters. That's what Mary chose. You see what she figured out was what's more important in that moment is not all the plans that I can be doing, what's more important is spending time at the feet of Jesus. Peter abandoned ship, swam to Jesus leaving all the other disciples to drag the net to shore. Like Mary, Peter realized what's most important. Because if it's all about Him, it's not about you. And if it's all about Him, it's not about your plan, it's not about your agenda, it's not about what you can do; it's about Him. And then I want you to notice if it's all about Him, not only is it not about you and not about your plan, if it's all about Him, it's not about what you bring. I like this part of the story. The other disciples, that is the other six, left holding the net of fish, dragging that net to shore while Peter has abandoned them, swam to shore to hasten his appearance of Jesus. And now these disciples dragging this net full of 153 big fish, I love the fact that somebody counted. John wants us to know there's not just a 153 fish, there's a 153 big fish. Not 150. Not 170. Not about a lot of fish. There's 153 big fish. We know because we drag them to shore. They dragged this net full of 153 big fish because they will not let it go. But look what happens when they arrive. They dragged this net full of 153 big fish to shore only to discover Jesus already has fish. They get to shore, Jesus has got a fire, He's got fish and He's got bread. And here's what they discover, these 153 fish that we didn't really

work for to begin with, but we did drag them to shore, and we make all the way to shore, we take the time to count them, and then we discover Jesus doesn't need what I bring. You and I do a great disservice to the kingdom if we ever begin to believe that Jesus needs me. If we ever begin to believe that living my faith is about what I bring to the table, it's about what I have, and surely there had to be an awkward moment. We've dragged this net full of fish all the way to the shore, and here's what we discover. Jesus already has fish. But Peter has learned something in that split second. Do you remember when Jesus first called Peter, what he was doing? He was fishing. Jesus came to Peter in Mark chapter 4 and said, "Follow me and I'll make you fish for men." And do you remember what Peter did? He left his nets and followed Jesus. And now in this moment, the moment John identifies that's the Lord, he's come full circle and he left his nets to follow Jesus. Because all of a sudden, he's finally figured it out. It's about Him. It has nothing to do with what I bring. It has nothing to do with who I am. It has nothing to do with the skills that I have. It's all about Him. It's about the revelation of Jesus in my life. It's about God's plans and not mine. I suspect Jesus in His goodness and kindness took some of the fish that they brought and added them to the fish that He already had. But the point of the story is not what the disciples brought, it's what Jesus already had. And He had all that they needed.

Well John told us what the story's about. It's not about fishing. It's not about boats. Not about the disciples. It's about Jesus. May I suggest to you this morning a story of your faith. It's about Him. It's about what Jesus has done for you. It's about your sin and Jesus as the Savior. It's about your need and Jesus as the needer. It's about you trusting Him for all that He has, not for what you bring. Earlier in Jesus' earthly ministry, Mark records a scene in Mark chapter 4, Jesus and the disciples on the sea. Same sea, perhaps the same boat. Jesus was with them at the time only He was asleep. They get out in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and a storm begins to come like often happened at the sea because it's surrounded by mountains and you can't see the storm coming. They get out into the middle of the sea and the sea becomes unfriendly and they're in the midst of the storm fearing for their lives. They awaken Jesus only to discover Jesus speaks to the wind, He calms the wind and the waves, and here's what the disciples said in Mark, chapter 4. "Who is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Now look at verse 12. Jesus has just told them, "Come and have breakfast." And then John says, "None of the disciples dared ask Him. 'Who are You?'" You know why? Because in that moment, they figured it out. He's the Lord. It's about Him. And whatever God is doing in your life, whatever plans God has for you, however God desires to use you, the lesson that you and I need to learn is the same lesson that it took the disciples this long to learn, it's about Him. You go back to verse 1, John records Jesus revealed Himself. He revealed Himself. You go to verse 7, it's the disciple whom Jesus loved who said to Peter, "It's the Lord." You go to verse 12, no one dared ask Him, "Who are You?" Because they knew it was the Lord. Look at verse 14. This is the third time Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples. Here's what John is saying. It's about Jesus. Is it possible there's too much you in your relationship with Him? Does it ever happen that our relationship with Jesus becomes about our plans? It becomes about what we bring. It becomes about what we want and less about who Jesus is and what He wants. May I remind you He knows your name. Jesus said in John chapter 10, verse 27, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them." God's not forgotten you. You're not hidden from God's plan. Heaven knows who you are and in this moment this morning, you have the opportunity to reframe the hero of your story. It's about Him. Matt Redman sings a song. Many of you have probably heard it, the Heart of Worship.

Chorus goes like this. I'm coming back to the heart of worship and it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus. I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing that I've made it. Because it's all about You, it's all about You, Jesus. Just a few days from now, the disciples will demonstrate that they finally understand. Peter stands before a crowd in Acts chapter 2 and preaches the gospel, the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Jesus who revealed Himself again at the shore. 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus from the boldness of a man who finally learned it's all about Jesus. He passed the final exam.

Maybe this morning Jesus is trying to reveal Himself again to you. Would you bow together in prayer with me? Maybe you've become frustrated feeling anonymous. Wondering when your time's going to come. When will you get the recognition you think you deserve. When will you get your name in the story. When will heaven bend its plans to your will. You need to be reminded it's not about you. It's about Jesus. Maybe this morning God's speaking to you. He's calling out your name. He's inviting you into a relationship with Him. He's saying to you, "It's about Me." You need to follow it. Maybe God's speaking His word to you, His will through His word and He's declared to you His plan and it means giving up yours. And you realize again it's all about Him. Maybe some response that the Lord is calling on you to make and in this moment of decision is your opportunity to follow Him. To demonstrate your obedience to His word and to His will. Your submission to the plan that God has. And maybe right now God in heaven is looking for you to say, "Yes." He's inviting you into a relationship with Him. He's inviting you into a journey of faith to follow His will. However God maybe leading in this moment as God speaks. I'm going to give you a chance to respond. God however You're speaking in this moment, whatever You desire from us. Whatever You desire to teach us, I pray You find us sensitive to Your will; listening as You speak. And God to Your glory, will You remind us again that the story of our faith is not about us, it's about Jesus. The Savior who died on the cross for our sin, who rose victorious defeating death. Who ascended to the Father sitting right now at the right hand at the throne of glory, interceding for our sin. It's about Him. God if You're speaking to us this morning, give us the boldness to respond. In Jesus name. Amen.