

What's your 'fishing'?

Part 2 of a 3-part series reflecting on the ending(s) of John's Gospel, ch20 & 21.

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Last week we began exploring the ending(s) to John's gospel with its first ending (John 20:19-31). The disciples are gathered in a locked room together, surrounded by anxiety, fear and uncertainty, and into that space Jesus appears and offers them peace and breathes Spirit upon them, to encourage them and continue to teach them more of the story, to help sustain them as they keep on believing.

Now into chapter 21, the start of the second ending to the gospel, some of the disciples are gathered again, not in a room, but on the shore of Galilee. Peter says, *'I'm going to fish'*, and the others who are with him say they will come too.

Peter, and many of the others, were fisherman. So going to fish was familiar to them, and perhaps, after 3 years following Jesus, had become something of a past-time. Sometimes this moment can be described as the disciples going back to old ways, perhaps even turning their back on Jesus' call to them to fish for people, and instead fishing for, well, fish.

There can be merit for us in reflecting on that interpretation, but I'm not sure that's the only way to hear the story. I wonder if Peter and his friends are not do much going back to old ways, but going off to spend time looking after their wellbeing. Why? Because I think we could quite equally read and hear the story as one about a group of friends going off to spend time doing something from their past that they love, enjoy and in the past found life-giving.

But yet, they have a bad night, this band of friends, and catch nothing.

As dawn comes, a voice comes from the shore – *'children, you've not got anything to eat have you?'*

'No', comes the reply.

'cast on the right side of the boat' says the stranger.

And so they do, and FISH! - the nets are bursting.

And Peter dives into the lake – for *'It is the Lord'*.

Once the rest of the disciples managed to drag the net of fish ashore, Jesus has a fire going, and says *'bring your fish, let's have breakfast together'*. and so they spend time together, in dawn's morning light.

I love the fact Jesus, initially as a stranger to them, calls *children* to them. They weren't children as we would see them, they were probably young adults by all accounts, but I love this image it leaves me with of someone standing on the shore, watching a group of friends playing around like children, having fun fishing together, despite the fact they'd not yet caught anything.

But then, with a bit of encouragement from this stranger, the disciples are blessed with nets a-bursting, and their fun and games bear fruit.

I reckon this story demonstrates to us just how interested Jesus is in us, in our wellbeing, and our every day. Jesus blesses his friends with direction to get a bumper catch after a long and relaxing night as friends on the lake, doing something they love and enjoy.

Then what happens? Jesus invites them to bring what they have, and to share breakfast together. To enjoy the fruits of their leisure. There's no teaching here, no lesson to learn, no parable told. Jesus just spends time with them, enjoying a meal together as the sun breaks on the shore.

For the disciples, their life-giving, enjoyable, fun-time-together activity was fishing, and Jesus was with them as they did so, enjoying its fruitfulness with them. What's your 'fishing'? What is life-giving for you? What fun is Jesus enjoying the fruitfulness of, with you?