

SUNDAY SCHOOL NOTES 1 MAY 2022

Choosing his new team

Have you ever thought about the 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension? They must have been pretty weird days for the disciples. They knew Jesus was alive – they had seen him, touched him and even given him food. But Jesus didn't go back to Pilate or Caiaphas or to the temple and show the people that he had risen.

Jesus did not want people to believe in him because of a miracle. He had always said that his friends would share the good news with the world. He therefore spent his time making sure that his friends knew the truth. So:

1. Jesus appeared to Mary in the garden and told her to tell the disciples that she had met him. Women were no longer unimportant!
2. Then Jesus met Cleophas and his friend. One didn't have to be important or well-known to tell others about him.
3. Jesus showed Thomas his wounds, praising those who would believe although they hadn't see him physically.
4. The last detailed story we have is about how Jesus met with a group of his disciples on a beach. This unlikely spot was a very important meeting place.

It began ordinarily enough. Peter was staying nearby with a group of those who had followed Jesus in his lifetime - 5 disciples and Nathaniel. Peter seems to have been getting restless for nothing much was happening and, of course, his conscience was probably pricking him. He could not get out of his mind the fact that he had betrayed Jesus.

Yes, he knew Jesus had risen, but he wanted the joy of the old life with Jesus back. And there was no sign that things would ever be the same. So one night Peter decided to go fishing. But although they fished all night, they caught nothing. (I am sure Peter's mood did not improve; perhaps he wondered if he had lost the knack?)

Then just after daybreak, a man on the shore seeing their boats riding high in the water, shouted out to them to lower the nets to the right side where there was a shoal. Now it can happen that people on shore can see the shadows under water better than the fishermen on the boat, but I wonder if Peter wasn't a bit grumpy at having to get help. Anyhow, they

lowered the nets and caught 153 fish – they counted them later! Amazingly though the fish dragged at the net, the net did not break. Maybe that was what made Jesus’ best friend sit up and notice – this was a miracle and when miracles occurred Jesus was there. He was sure that man on the shore was Jesus. He told Peter and immediately Peter jumped overboard and waded to the shore – hooray! Jesus was around. Now maybe things would get moving!

And sure enough it was Jesus. He had made a fire and was braaiing bread and a few fish. At his request they brought more fish and had a very satisfactory breakfast .

But there was unfinished business between Jesus and Peter so, after breakfast, they strolled off for a walk. Jesus had to make sure Peter knew that, even though he had denied Jesus, he still had a job to do for Jesus. Three times (to wipe out the three denials) Jesus asked Peter if he loved him enough to give up everything for his sake. When Peter showed that he understood the need for this, Jesus gave him his task: Peter was to look after the “lambs” and “sheep” (those who would discover that Jesus was the Good Shepherd). He warned Peter that the day would come when Peter would suffer for his faith – it did too, but Peter was so thrilled to be forgiven and to be useful that he accepted this future. So Jesus commissioned another type of person “the sinner”!

We probably would have done things differently. We would have wanted to make a public statement declaring our victory over death. But God planned that people would be introduced to the Risen Lord by those who knew him. And nothing much has changed over the centuries. People don’t usually become Christians because Jesus appears to them in person or in a vision. They learn about him because they watch or listen to others who love him. This is how God works. We all have a responsibility.

Wow! He gave his life for me and risks his reputation on my words and actions. How dare I let him down?