

**Introduction:** In John's Gospel we have focused on the Glory of our Crucified, Risen Lord. We focus this week on Hebrews 2 and John 21 and our Risen Lord's patient instruction of His disciples for forty days after Easter. He finds them staying in locked rooms "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19), as men terrified by the recent events of the Passion. His task therefore is to shore up their weak faith and to prepare them to face the hostile world after He has returned to Heaven. May we be greatly encouraged even though we face a hostile world – for we have a secret weapon! A Savior who perseveres with us to enable us to face each day – in spite of our fears and doubts.

**Monday: read John 20:30-31 and Hebrews 2:10-12.** The Lord Jesus endured many sufferings in order to be equipped to help us as the 'Author of our Salvation' (Heb. 2:10). Even after the Glory of His Resurrection, He was not ashamed to identify with His disciples in their weak, vacillating faith. We also are His brethren, of whom He is not ashamed (Heb. 2:11). This explains why Jesus so eagerly returned to the work of strengthening His Church after Easter: He realized that none of us in His Church would survive for one day on our own without His presence and teaching. So He eagerly landed once more on the shores of our humanity, having sailed through the blood seas of Calvary, for forty more days of 'declaring God's name to His brothers' (Heb. 2:12), so that they and we might persevere in our faith 'that Jesus is the Christ' (John 20:31).

Meditate and Pray: How we should thank Jesus that He never grows tired of our company. Even to the very last day of the world, Jesus will be found to be our faithful captain helping each of us, even the weakest of us, find safe passage into the port of salvation, as Hymn # 601 (vv. 1 & 3) reminds us:

*"Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life's tempestuous sea; unknown waves before me roll, hiding rock and treach'rous shoal; chart and compass come from thee: Jesus, Savior, pilot me."*

*"When at last I near the shore, and the fearful breakers roar 'twixt me and the peaceful rest, then, while leaning on thy breast, may I hear thee say to me, "Fear not, I will pilot thee.""*

(Edward Hopper, 1871)

**Tuesday: read John 20:30-21:4.** We find the disciples in their discouragement and uncertainty of the future returning to the only occupation they knew apart from following Jesus: fishing – even though in Luke 5:10 Jesus clearly told them: "From **now on** you will catch men." How wonderful, therefore, to see Jesus appear on shore at just the right moment in John 21:4 – ready to restore and renew the disciples' wavering faith.

Meditate and Pray: It is one thing to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ at the moment of conversion, and indeed that is foundational to all that follows. Yet such 'Conversion Faith' will not survive unless the Lord Jesus daily renews it and strengthens our legs in the walk of faith. This is why John promises us that the work of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John has as its goal that we may "go on believing" (present subjunctive in John 20:31) "that Jesus is the Christ."

"Lord Jesus, please, today, right now, confirm me in the way of life. Strengthen the weak knees of my faith so that I will walk the path laid out for me in your Word. Help me to believe the words of Proverbs 3:5: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.' Amen."

**Wednesday: read John 21:1-7.** Who was this crew of fishermen? Look at the names in John 21:2:

- Simon Peter, whose earlier denial of Christ would still require more restoration work later in John 21.
- Doubting Thomas, who as James Boice says: “was the rank unbeliever to whom Jesus appeared just verses before this.”
- Nathanael, whose pessimism and prejudice towards Jesus’ humble beginnings in Galilee come to the fore in John 1:46: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”
- James and John, called by their old names, ‘The sons of Zebedee,’ whose pride of place and harshness of spirit come out several times in the Gospels, desiring to call fire down on the Samaritans (Luke 9:54); arguing with the others about who was greatest (Luke 22:24) and even sending their mother to request special places of honor in the coming Kingdom of Christ in Matthew 20:20-21.

What a motley crew! And yet Christ generously pours so many fish into their nets that He removes all the fear of want which drove them to return to fishing in the first place. He is still ‘the Lord’ as John declares in John 21:7 – able to rule the waves, and even the underwater routes of fish – all for His people’s benefit.

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus again for being such a persevering Savior, with the words of Hymn # 457 (v. 3) in our Trinity Hymnal: “*O to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be; let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wand’ring heart to thee. Prone to wander – Lord, I feel it – prone to leave the God I love: here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.*” (Robert Robinson, 1758)

**Thursday: read John 21:7-14.** We ought to thank God that His work in the disciples continued despite their fears and discouragements. For example, it is a blessing that they stick together as a band in John 21:1-14. What compelled them to stick together, thus helping each other to avoid the crisis in faith which isolation (think here about Doubting Thomas’ absence in John 20:24-26) often brings? James Boice puts it this way, quoting the 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher, Alexander MacClaren:

“Here we find the disciples in Galilee, where everyone knew them and knew that they had gone off to follow Jesus, not scattering as we might think they would, but rather holding together as if they were still a special company with a unique bond. What can account for this? Alexander MacClaren writes: *There is only one explanation...Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. That drew them together once more. You cannot build a church on a dead Christ; and of all the proofs of the Resurrection, I take it that there is none that it is harder for an unbeliever to account for...than the simple fact that Christ’s disciples held together after He was dead, and presented a united front to the world.*”

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus for how His resurrection holds us together as His Church. Even when we want to give up, the Spirit of the Resurrected Christ within us will not allow it. We cleave to Christ now as our Risen Lord the same way Jacob clung to Him in Genesis 32 – because we have no where else to go. May our prayer always be: “Lord, never let me discover any options of survival except you. Even though the whole world succeeds in finding other gods and other sources of idolatrous strength – let me find no other arm to lean upon; no other source of security. Make me persevere in clinging to you...because I know, as my Confession of Faith says: ‘Perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon...the free and unchangeable love of God the Father.’ Amen.”

**Friday: read John 21:15-25 and Acts 10:37-40.** The Apostles often celebrate the infinite number of good works which Jesus Christ accomplished while on earth, as He went about “doing good and healing all who were under the power of the Devil” (Acts 10:38). What an expansive statement from Peter: “Healing ALL who were under the power of the Devil.” Such is the apostolic testimony to the complete and utter devastation of the kingdom of evil which Christ accomplished. John puts it another way in his first letter: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8). And how did He destroy these evil works? By His good works: infinite in number and variety – perfectly designed to meet and defeat every work of evil in our lives. As John puts it in John 21:25: “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” Perhaps this will be the theme in Heaven on ‘movie nights’: replaying the numberless miracles and good works which John couldn’t fit in His Gospel and which all the books of the world couldn’t contain!

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank the Lord Jesus for the immensity and the infinity of His saving work. We will need an eternity to begin to appreciate all that He has done to make us His. As one anonymous poet put it:

“Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made;  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade;  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.”