

76. GONE FISHING (JOHN 21:1-3) 11/09/14

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, KS PASTOR LEE HENDON

WHEN MY KIDS CHRIS & MICHELLE WERE GROWING UP THEY WOULD LOVE IT WHEN I WOULD TAKE THEM FISHING - ESPECIALLY CHRIS - MICHELLE NOT AS MUCH SO. CHRIS BECAME QUIET THE FISHERMAN - CAN EASILY OUT FISH ME ANY DAY. WE WOULD LOAD UP MY 16 FOOT V-BOTTOM ALUMINUM FISHING BOAT WITH A 6 HP EVINRUDE OUTBOARD & OFF WE WOULD GO - GONE FISHING! LAKE FORK IN TEXAS WAS ONE OF OUR FAVORITE SPOTS - LAKE WHITNEY & LAKE GRAPEVINE TOO. THE BASS, CRAPPIE & SANDIES WERE NOT SAFE WITH US ON THE LAKES. WHEN WE WENT FISHING IT WAS FOR FUN & RELAXATION & WE USUALLY CAUGHT PLENTY.

I REMEMBER FISHING IN FLORIDA AS A COLLEGE KID ALONG SIDE AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN OLDER GUY. WE GOT TO TALKING. HE WAS FRIENDLY & REMARKED, "YOU WHITE FOLKS FISH DIFFERENTLY THAN MOST BLACKS. YOU FISH FOR FUN, WE FISH TO EAT." THAT MADE A STRONG IMPRESSION ON ME ABOUT *DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES* ON FISHING.

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN WE FIND THIS NARRATIVE ABOUT SEVERAL OF THE DISCIPLES WALKING BY THE SEA OF TIBERIAS WHEN PETER REMARKED, "I AM GOING FISHING." THE OTHERS SAID, "WE WILL GO WITH YOU." GONE FISHING - LUCK OF THE FISHING HOLE - THEY CAUGHT NOTHING. CHRIS & I HAD SOME FISHING TRIPS LIKE THAT. WE CALLED 'EM - GONE BOATING. HA! IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOUR *PERSPECTIVE*.

SIMON PETER'S *PERSPECTIVE* ON "GONE FISHING" WAS DIFF-ERENT THAN THAT OF A RECREATIONAL FISHERMAN. WE RECALL THAT PETER & HIS BROTHER ANDREW WERE PARTNERS IN THE FISHING BUSINESS ON THE SEA OF GALILEE. GONE FISHING WAS **BUSINESS** FOR PETER.

KEEP IN MIND THAT JESUS HAD MADE NUMEROUS APPEAR-ANCES TO THE DISCIPLES AS THE RESURRECTED LORD. BUT THEY WERE APPEARANCE INTO & THEN OUT OF THEIR LIVES. RESTLESS, IMPULSIVE PETER HAD TO HAVE SOMETHING MORE PRONOUNCED & SUBSTANTIAL TO TAKE COMMAND OF HIS LIFE. THEY HAD BEEN DRIFTING ALONG FOR SEVERAL DAYS, DRIFTING, DRIFTING, DRIFT-ING ALONG - TAKE CHARGE PETER COULD HAVE NO MORE TO DO WITH THAT! **TIME TO GET BACK TO WORK!** PETER MADE AN IMPULSIVE, KNEE-JERK REACTION TO RETURN TO HIS FORMER WAY OF LIFE. "I AM GOING FISHING," MEANT, BACK TO WORK.

PETER HAD BEEN THE FIRST ONE TO REACH THE EMPTY TOMB & BECAUSE IT WAS EMPTY - BELIEVED. HE WAS IN THE GROUP OF DISCIPLES WHEN MARY - OUT OF BREATHE FROM RUNNING BACK - TOLD THEM, "I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!" PETER WAS IN THE UPPER ROOM BOTH TIMES WHEN JESUS APPEARED TO THEM TO SAY, "PEACE BE WITH YOU." HE HAD SEEN THE RESURRECTED LORD - FACE TO FACE - CAN YOU JUST IMAGINE THE EXCITEMENT & ADRENALINE RUSH!

HOW AWESOME! HE ALSO WITNESSED THOMAS' FAITH RESTORED. IN SPITE OF IT ALL PETER HAD EXPERIENCED WITH THE RESURRECTED LORD, HE YET TURNED BACK TO HIS OLD WAY OF LIFE - GONE FISHING TO MAKE A LIVING. I JUST LOVE THESE GUYS! THEY WERE SO DOWN TO EARTH & WELL SO HUMAN & NOT THE DIVINE PLASTER SAINTS WE MAKE THEM INTO. THEY WERE JUST LIKE US! JUST LIKE US!

HOW EASY IT IS TO FALL BACK TO OLD PATTERNS & HABITS IN OUR LIVES. IF YOU HAVE EVER HAD A DRUG OR ALCOHOL ADDICTION YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. OR PERHAPS YOUR DRUG OF CHOICE WAS SEX OR WORK OR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR OR ANGER - PERHAPS THE ENTRAPMENT OF A DEPENDENT-CO-DEPENDANT RELATIONSHIP, WHATEVER. YOU THINK YOU ARE TURNING THE CORNER & A LULL SETS IN - BOREDOM - THERE YOU ARE TURNING BACK TO YOUR OLD PATTERNS OR WAYS OF DOING YOUR LIFE - PERHAPS YOU HAVE BEEN THERE, DONE THAT?

GONE FISHING CAN ALSO BE A WAY TO DEAL WITH YOUR INNER TURMOILS. MY SPELL CHECK WOULD NOT LET ME PUT AN "S" ON TURMOIL BUT YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT WE ARE OFTEN TIMES DEALING WITH MULTIPLE TURMOILS - BESIEGING US TO LAY HOLD OF OUR HEARTS & SOULS, TO DRAG US DOWN & DRAIN US EMPTY. SO I GAVE SPELL CHECK A DOSE OF REALITY & ADDED THE NEW SPELLING WITH AN "S." YES!! OFTEN WE TURN TO OUR WORK OR AVOCATIONS TO HIDE OUT FROM WHAT IS REALLY BOTHERING US - DOING THE RIGHT THINGS FOR THE WRONG REASONS.

BUT PETER DID NOT GO THERE ALONE - HE CALLED UPON HIS SUPPORT GROUP TO GO WITH HIM & THEY WILLINGLY AGREED, "WE WILL GO WITH YOU." OF COURSE, THEY HAD EXPERIENCED THE RESURRECTED LORD AS WELL. THEY WERE CAUGHT UP IN THE SAME ABYSS OF THE IN-BETWEEN-TIME WHEN LIFE IS FILLED WITH UNCERTAINTY & NO DIRECTION - WHEN IS THE OTHER SHOE GOING TO DROP? WHAT NEXT? WHY DOES OUR LIVES HAVE THESE DOWN TIMES & DISTRACTIONS - LIVING IN THE QUAGMIRE.

THIS STORY IS A GREAT ONE:

ONE DAY, I DECIDED TO QUIT. I WANTED TO QUIT MY JOB, TO QUIT MY RELATIONSHIPS, TO QUIT MY SPIRITUALITY; I EVEN WANTED TO QUIT MY LIFE. I WENT TO THE WOODS TO HAVE ONE LAST TALK WITH GOD. "GOD," I SAID, "CAN YOU GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON TO NOT QUIT?"

GOD'S ANSWER SURPRISED ME, "LOOK AROUND. DO YOU SEE THE FERN & THE BAMBOO?"

"YES," I REPLIED, "WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH IT?"

"WHEN I PLANTED THE FERN & THE BAMBOO SEEDS I TOOK VERY GOOD CARE OF THEM. I GAVE THEM LIGHT & WATER. THE FERN QUICKLY GREW FROM THE EARTH. ITS BRILLIANT GREEN COVERED THE FLOOR. YET NOTHING CAME FROM THE BAMBOO SEED. BUT I DID NOT QUIT ON THE BAMBOO."

"IN THE SECOND YEAR THE FERN GREW MORE VIBRANT & PLENTIFUL. AGAIN, NOTHING CAME FROM THE BAMBOO SEED. BUT I DID NOT QUIT ON THE

BAMBOO. IN THE THIRD YEAR THERE WAS STILL NOTHING FROM THE BAMBOO SEED. BUT I WOULD NOT QUIT. IN THE FOURTH YEAR, AGAIN, THERE WAS NOTHING FROM THE BAMBOO SEED. STILL, I WOULD NOT QUIT.”

“THEN IN THE FIFTH YEAR A TINY SPROUT EMERGED FROM THE EARTH. COMPARED TO THE FERN IT WAS SEEMINGLY SMALL & INSIGNIFICANT. BUT JUST 6 MONTHS LATER THE BAMBOO ROSE TO OVER 100 FEET TALL. IT HAD SPENT THE FIVE YEARS GROWING ROOTS. THOSE ROOTS MADE IT STRONG & GAVE IT WHAT IT NEEDED TO SURVIVE & STAND TALL. I WOULD NOT GIVE ANY OF MY CREATIONS A CHALLENGE THEY COULD NOT HANDLE.,” GOD SAID TO ME. “DID YOU KNOW, MY CHILD, THAT ALL THIS TIME YOU HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING, YOU HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN GROWING ROOTS? I WOULD NOT QUIT ON THE BAMBOO- I WILL NEVER QUIT ON YOU!

YOUR TIME WILL COME,” GOD SAID TO ME. “YOU WILL RISE HIGH.”

“HOW HIGH SHOULD I RISE?” I ASKED.

“HOW HIGH WILL THE BAMBOO RISE?” GOD ASKED ME.

“AS HIGH AS IT CAN?” I INQUIRED.

“YES,” GOD SAID, “GIVE ME GLORY BY RISING AS HIGH AS YOU CAN.

REMEMBER...I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU, NOR FORSAKE YOU. I WILL NOT GIVE UP ON YOU. I WILL NEVER QUIT ON YOU.”

EVERYONE HAS DAYS WHEN THEY JUST WANT TO “QUIT” OR “GO FISHING.”

WHEN THERE ARE STRUGGLES...OBSTACLES IN LIFE, REMEMBER WE ARE JUST

GROWING ROOTS! GOD HAS A PURPOSE IN MIND FOR EACH OF US - TALK TO GOD

- LET GOD HELP YOU REALIZE YOUR PURPOSE!