

Joyful in Jesus

Well the novelty has worn off! All the changes to our lifestyles. Some restrictions are being loosened and there is perhaps a real sense of trying to normalise as best we can but nevertheless you may feel pretty wearied and fed up with how life seems to be right now.

However much we want to see the best in the present situation, or see some causes for optimism - and we should do both of those - we still may just feel pretty fed up with this whole experience. "I want my life back to what it was in December, in January" - which seems like another age!

How are you coping? How's your confidence in the future? Are you managing yourself well - physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually?

There certain things or certain people we may particularly miss: School, work dynamics, sports, gym, church gatherings, cinema... whatever. We can really miss things when we realise we can't have them. Maybe when we get some of those things back- we'll appreciate and value them in a fresh way.

To help us now in these times I want to read a section from John's Gospel chapter 21.

Where we come in is when some of those early followers of Jesus are getting on and doing what so many of them used to do - fishing. The resurrected Jesus meets with them:

John 21 *Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

⁴*Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.*

⁵*He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"*

"No," they answered.

⁶*He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.*

⁷*Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards ⁹When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.*

¹⁰*Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

There are lots of things going on here - catching fish; Jesus cooking breakfast and meeting up with them; Jesus transforming their working day. But listen to this section of it:

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water

How do you hear John's cry of delight? "It is the Lord!" - to me it is so joyful, and passionate.

And look at Peter's response: this is bold, enthusiastic, throw caution to the wind Peter who so often acts before he thinks. Well here Peter gets it right. He wants to get to Jesus - no messing - and if he thinks swimming will get him faster than the boat will, into the water he goes. What enthusiasm for Jesus!

I simply want to say this. *How's your passion for the Lord Jesus?*

Is it 'John like' - Jesus grabs your attention? Is it 'Peter like' - getting to Jesus matters more than anything else; to get closer to the sweet, captivating, enjoyable and all-consuming delight that is spending time with the Lord Jesus?

Jesus is worth all of our attention and more because He is God the Son. But also we are better when we go to Him.

Jesus welcomes us in *Matthew 11: ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

"Come to me". Jesus alone is the source of true rest, and of a right perspective. He will help us carry the load of the pressures of life in these times. These are hard times - but they will be harder if we look less to Jesus. They will be sweeter and more enjoyable, more hope giving, more refreshing - if we spend time with Jesus. Jesus changes how we view our circumstances.

How are you coping? I will be better with Jesus. What do you miss? You can't lose Jesus when you have him.

Jesus is always available, accessible and always welcomes us. But He will not force His friendship on us. He will wait patiently and lovingly for us to want to be with Him. Go to Jesus. We don't need to jump out of a boat to do it - we can meet with him by prayer wherever we are, and whatever else is going on. Welcome Jesus afresh into your lives and lifestyles.

"It is the Lord," Yes! He is with us and there for us.

AMEN