

**The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.**

## **“Come and Eat”**

**John 21:8-13**

**Intro:** We are currently in the middle of John’s account of the miracle of the great catch. Now, John doesn’t identify this event specifically as a sign or a miracle but it is none the less. I mean, how wide could that boat be? Had they only cast their nets over the left side of the boat all night long? Of course not! But John isn’t writing this account to impress upon the reader the magnitude of the miracle or how it points to Jesus as being the Messiah. That truth has already been well established in the body of this Book. No, John relates this scene to us for all the spiritual principles that are observed in it and addressed by it.

We see in this account a picture of the assembled church. Sure, not all the disciples are present; not even any of the other believers that were part of the small group that still followed Jesus even after His crucifixion. There are only 7 of them here but that’s still enough to make up an assembly of believers to serve as a representation of the church. Humanly speaking, that’s all the church is – an ecclesia – an assembly of believers. Any group of people can make up an assembly and they call themselves anything they want; but they can’t call themselves a church. Only a group of individuals who are believers in Jesus Christ can make up a church. Consequently, it is only through the church that Jesus Christ has ordained that the Gospel message should be carried out into the world.

That’s not to say that certain Christian organizations can’t assist in that endeavour but the responsibility lies with the church and those organizations that align themselves with a local church for the purpose of partnering in the work of the Gospel will be most successful. It is an issue of authority and accountability. Jesus has given the church both the authority and responsibility to take the Gospel into the world and any Christian organization that resists aligning with a church calls into question their motives and goals for their particular ministry. It’s not just important that we strive to do what Jesus told us to do, it’s also important that we strive to do it how Jesus told us to do it: submitted to Him.

This leads us to the next spiritual principle revealed in this account: the

possibility and futility of serving Jesus in the flesh. These disciples had expended quite a bit of energy in their fishing excursion and they had absolutely nothing to show for it. But, when they responded with obedience to the direction of Jesus, the blessings flowed and could not be ignored. This doesn't mean that every large church is flowing in the Spirit and every small church is struggling in the flesh. This is a spiritual principle that applies generally to individual believers and groups of believers. It is not a hard and fast rule that must be rigorously applied to every situation. But, no matter what the circumstances are in the field you serve in, if you seek the Lord's direction and obey it when given – your ministry for Him will be blessed.

As we finish out this story today in our text, we will look at another spiritual principle; one that has touched every believer in this room. I can say this with confidence because this principle is true for every believer in every age. It is the principle of Jesus' earthly provision for His followers. This is something all believers experience but some seem to be able to notice it more than others. I can tell you; growing up in the home of a full-time Pastor, Associate-Pastor, Christian School Principle and Missionary; we saw the Lord provide for our needs in very tangible ways. I still to this day do not know how my parents pulled off raising 6 kids that really liked to eat on a minister's salary. I can testify that the Lord's provision for my parents continues to this day; as it does for Annette and I; for Spencer and Mari; as it does for each of you. I'm sure each one of you could testify to the same, in one degree or another, in your own life.

**8-14** – John paints a vivid picture here that catches our imagination. Just think of what this would have looked like if you had been standing on the shore that morning. All the goings on – Hey, this is something interesting! Again, the purpose for John including this in his Book is not to entertain and not necessarily to inform but to teach, to instruct us as to how we as the church now are to relate to our risen Savior and Lord.

**8** – John was the first to notice and vocalize that it was Jesus on the shore, directing their efforts (v7). Peter then dives in the water to swim to shore. This is typical of these 2 co-laborers: John recognizes - Peter responds; John perceives - Peter jumps in. That was Peter: impetuous, volatile, vacillating. But, Peter was also strong, stubborn and committed to his Lord. John wrote his Gospel when he was well into his 90's. Peter was long dead by then but it seems here that John takes the opportunity to take a good

natured dig at the impetuous nature of his old friend.

Peter jumped in the water, presumably to get to shore first. John doesn't say if he did or not. All John tells us is that the boat was not far from the shore, only about 200 cubits (300 feet). This is clearly the testimony of an eyewitness but the question is: was it really necessary to jump in and start swimming? I can almost see the disciples in the boat rowing with gusto, passing up Peter as he slogs through the water. At least we could give Peter an E for effort – his heart was in the right place even if his mind wasn't. But, this scene was just an aside; the real lesson begins in [v9](#).

**9-11** – A fire of coals...fish...and bread – What, did Jesus stop at the store on His way to the lake? Notice how tender Jesus is to these men, these discouraged, exhausted servants who were cold, hungry and wet – at least one was soaking wet. What we want to take note of here is that, not only did Jesus know exactly what these disciples needed; He also lovingly provided it for them. This scene is not to be taken lightly. Remember, this is none other than the risen, glorified Lord! He has passed through the valley of death and came out victorious over death, hell and the grave and yet, as glorious and amazing as all that is, He is still humble enough to stop and make breakfast for His disciples. He humbly served them by taking the time to prepare a fire and cook food for them.

Although this is a beautiful scene of the loving care of Jesus for His followers, it's not without a bit of controversy, at least for one of the disciples. John uses the phrase a fire of coals which doesn't necessarily jump out to us as being significant until we realize the only other time he has used this phrase in his Gospel was back in [18:18](#). Jesus has already been arrested and Peter and John were trailing behind to see what would happen to Him. In the course of time, Peter was asked by a girl if he was also one of Jesus' disciples – Peter denied it. Then he stood and warmed himself by the fire of coals that had been made. Maybe this scene brought some difficult memories to Peter's mind. It's generally not healthy to dwell on the past but sometimes it's good for us to remember the past, especially if we have something to confess.

Jesus already had food prepared but He asked the disciples to bring some of their catch to supplement the meal. They didn't provide the breakfast, Jesus did. What they caught merely added to the menu, it didn't make it.

Likewise, our efforts, though guided and directed by Jesus, do not make the church, they merely add to what Jesus has already made and continues to make; through our efforts and the efforts of a multitude of others.

Peter was the first to respond to the Lord's request and he did what the other disciples apparently could not do – he dragged the net to land all by himself. John tells us that the net was full of large fish – 153 in total. Now, you might question who would actually sit down and count that many fish. The answer would be – a fisherman! You better believe it! Not only do they know how many fish they caught, they can usually tell you how many of each kind they caught! Why do fishermen count their catch? Because, if they get stopped by Game Warden, they know he's for sure going to count them and you really want to know what that number is before he does.

A lot of ink has been spilt over the centuries surmising over the significance of the number 153. There have been all kinds of theories as to what the hidden meaning of that number could be and we don't have time today to entertain any of those theories because they're all just guesses anyway. The only thing we are confident that the number 153 represents – is the number of fish in the net. The many allegorical interpretations of this number are a warning to us against trying to create or discover hidden meanings in the text of the Bible. There are some things in the Bible that are difficult to understand but God always says what He means. There's no need to hype Biblical "secrets"!

**12-13** – Come and eat – Jesus invites the disciples to come and refresh themselves with the food He's prepared. Clearly, there was something unusual about the appearance of Jesus after the resurrection. Maybe it was the result of the beatings He endured before going to the cross or it could have been the nature of His glorified body. Whatever it was; these men, who were normally talkative before, were at a complete loss for words in the presence of Jesus. The verb translated "ask" means "to examine by questioning" and this was their normal habit before the resurrection, to ask questions of Jesus concerning His teachings, His miracles or the meaning of certain events or even insight into the future. But here, each knew it was Jesus but a new reverence prevented them from questioning Him.

The invitation of Jesus is our focus because it's here that we see His gracious provision for His own. There are actually several invitations

extended by Jesus scattered throughout the Gospels and it may benefit us to understand the context of this particular invitation in light of the others. The first invitation is found in [John 1:39](#). John the Baptist was standing by the Jordan River one day when Jesus walked by. He pointed to Him and said, “Behold the Lamb of God...” 2 of John’s disciples heard him say that and took it as a command to begin following Jesus. So they left John and started following Him. When Jesus turned and saw them following, He asked them, “What do you want?” They answered, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” Jesus said, “Come and see.”

This invitation was far more than just an encouragement for them to check out His “crib.” This was an invitation for them to come to Him for salvation, to discover Him as their Savior. In this context the words mean the same as that great invitation in [Ps 34:8](#) “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good”. The disciples came, tasted, and saw; then they went to their friends and relatives to tell them, “We have found the Messiah” ([John 1:41](#)).

Of the other invitations we will consider, this is the only one that is directed to absolutely everyone. It’s true that not everyone will heed Christ’s call and come. But this doesn’t alter the fact that the invitation has been extended to them as well as everyone else. When God calls people to faith, He is issuing a genuine invitation, which is also a command. If we do not come, it’s not because we’re not invited. It’s because we’re stubborn, sinful, and rebellious.

2) [John 7:37](#) – Come and drink. This invitation appears to be broad – if anyone... but it’s really limited to anyone who thirsts. This invitation is extended only to those who truly see their need. Thirst is not anything in itself; it’s a lack of something. It is an emptiness; a crying need. It’s a need that can only be satiated by Jesus Christ. To come to Jesus and drink essentially means to put one’s faith in Him, to trust in, to rely on, to cling to Jesus from now into all eternity. The result will be Him not just meeting your need but meeting it with abundance. From a heart that was parched a thirsty will flow a river of spiritual life and abundance because Jesus will provide it through the Holy Spirit. Not only will you receive a blessing but you will become a blessing to others.

3) [Matt 11:28-29](#) – Come and learn. Jesus was teaching in an area where most people rejected Him. They had rejected John the Baptist and now they

were rejecting Him. But some had believed and Jesus rejoiced in them. He thanked the Father (vs25) for hiding the truth from the wise and prudent but revealing it to the simple (babes). Then He invites those same simple believers to come and learn from Him. Here is a wonderful truth: you don't have to be an intellectual giant to understand the Gospel or become wise in spiritual matters. As a matter of fact, although the wise are not excluded, God's actually chosen "the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise..." (1 Cor 1:27).

This happens when they come to Christ and learn of Him. I have met many a simple Christian who has never had any formal training but are spiritually wise because they've learned from Him who is the personification of wisdom!

4) Mark 6:31 – Come and rest. The disciples had been so busy with ministry, they didn't even have time to stop and eat. Jesus knew they needed a vacation. Was there still ministry to do? Yes, but Jesus knew it would be there when they returned. Some believers think that if ministry is going to get done, they must be the ones to do it. That's not the case. Salvation is of God, we are only responsible to obey Him and serve as He guides, directs and provides. Nobody can do everything but everyone can do something and when we do, our labors will be blessed as He blesses them. Winning souls is actually beyond our capabilities, that's God's job and only He can do it. Our job is to carry the message. We're the pipe, we carry the water. God's responsible for the pressure, the flow and the results.

5) John 21:12 – Come and eat. Even in His resurrected glory, Jesus was mindful of the physical needs of His disciples and He was active in providing for them. He continues to do so today. This truth allowed Paul to write, even while in prison, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). But this invitation concerns more than just physical provision, it involves fellowship with Jesus. In the Bible, eating always suggests fellowship. Meals required preparation and they were drawn out affairs. Thus, to eat with a person was to have fellowship with them. It's the same for us today. What else is the church but one great fellowship? It's a fellowship of believers with the Lord and with each other. Jesus invites us to this table daily so that we might enjoy fellowship with Him. When we do that, we can't help but desire, seek out and enjoy fellowship with His people too!

Some Christians are going to heaven miserably; others are going with the joy in their hearts and on their faces. What is the difference? It's that the latter have learned to come and dine with Jesus and with other believers. The Christian life is a shared life in which our joy is found only in Jesus. If you lack that joy, take time to be with Him. Turn off the normal distractions and spend time with Jesus in the Word and with other Christians. He will speak to you from His Word and show you both the meaning and eternal value of true Christian fellowship.

There's one more invitation. None of us have heard it yet but we will if we are truly God's children. It's found in [Matt 25](#) and comes at the end of His Olivet discourse, just before His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus is discussing the separation of the sheep from the goats at the end of this age. The sheep will be at His right hand, the goats on the left. Then the King will invite those on His right to "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you..." ([34](#)). To all those who have known Jesus and been changed by Him, He invites them to "Come...inherit."

Not too many of us have any earthly inheritance to speak of and if we do, it will pass away. But there's an inheritance laid up for us; there's a kingdom laid up for us. And we shall definitely inherit both of them if we are Jesus' people. Paul writes of his hope in this inheritance in [II Tim 1:12](#). He wrote this towards the end of his life. He's labored long through many hardships. He's been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, snake-bit, slandered and imprisoned. But Paul knows he has invested his life in Jesus. He has laid up treasure where moth and rust do not destroy. As he comes to the end of a long life and a difficult ministry, he knows that Jesus has never disappointed him.

Jesus will never disappoint those who trust in Him! 😊