

## JESUS STANDING ON THE SHORE (Jn. 21:4)

Do you ever feel you are almost ‘at the end of your tether’ because it seems as if life could not hurl any more problems and hurts at you? ... The disciples had their problems ... Jesus was gone, their dreams had collapsed ... and they retreated back to their fishing. Their hearts weren’t in it though. Previously, catching fish was their life, but that changed when they met Jesus, **Jn. 21:1** After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. <sup>2</sup> There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. ... They could not even be good at that anymore!

Come on to the shore though ... leave the fishermen out at sea and come on to the shore. Here are three simple thoughts by way of encouragement ...

**THE SAVIOUR WAS WATCHING**      It was early morning, the dawn had broken, and the sun was just lifting over the Galilean hills. The birds were singing in the trees and the water was lapping on the stony beach. Absolute tranquillity! The Sea of Galilee is so beautiful, so picturesque.

There is not much sound out on the waters either for there was no fish being hauled in! Yes, a couple of boats are out there, but there is not a lot happening. There is not the usual shouting or noise from the fishermen. They are on board, but they are tired ... they are weary ... they are deflated ... like the calm sea, *listless*.

You could see there was nothing in the nets draped over the sides of their boats. They had been fishing all night and they had caught absolutely nothing. It had been a waste of a night ... They were going home as empty-handed as they came ... but that is not the whole story!

The background to the story relates to three-and-a-half years earlier when they were out in those same boats and fishing was their career. ... From their boyhood, they had been taught to fish, but three-and-a-half years earlier, their lives had taken an unexpected turn when Jesus met them on the shore to tell them, **Mt. 4:19** Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they *did* leave their nets, - they gave up their former life, and they followed Jesus up and down the country ... all over the place, ... meeting and speaking with people they would not have met otherwise. ... Jesus changed their lives ... but then He began to speak about how He would be betrayed, and how the authorities would take His life.

The disciples could not understand that kind of talk! ... And then Jesus *was* taken from them. ... He died and was buried ... and they didn't know what to do. ... Can you ever go back to where you were before? Can you go back to the past? They tried it! ...

Some of them returned home towards Emmaus, some of them stayed in Jerusalem for a while, and some of them returned to Galilee. ... The truth is ... they couldn't settle no matter where they went.

Early this particular morning though ... Look along the beach ... along the stony shore of the Sea of Galilee and you will see **the Saviour was watching**. ... Look, and you will see Jesus staring out at what Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, Philip and Andrew were doing. ... He loved those disciples. He had called them into His work. He had invested His time and energy in them. They were precious to Him ... and He was **watching** them.

From where they were, they did not see Him, - they probably were not looking for Him. There could have been an early morning mist and they wouldn't have seen Him ... they did not know He was there, but **the Saviour was watching**.

The Lord Jesus will never leave you. Yes, it can get awful dark ... but He is the Light the darkness can never overcome! He is the Light which shines through the darkness. but He promises, *Jn. 8:12* I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. ... Your worries can almost squeeze the life out of you. ... You might be concerned about our church, and how long we can continue to struggle against the swirling tide. ... According to a poll carried out in May 2022, only 6% of UK adults identify as practising Christians, which includes all shades ... and 42% identify as non-practising Christians. The same poll registered 4% identifying as Muslim, while over 50% claim to be atheist. ... *It is* dark, and it is hard to see ahead! ... But the disciples of the Lord Jesus have been here before, and they discovered that behind the mist, on the shore, **the Saviour was watching**. ... Don't let your trust in the Lord Jesus fade. Instead, keep your attention fixed on Him for He has not gone away, nor left you.

**THE SAVIOUR WAS WAITING**      I am not saying it was easy for the fishermen. It was far from easy. It was anything but easy! It was probably the longest night of their lives. Their Master had been killed. Their hearts were no longer in their fishing. They couldn't catch a single fish ... How much worse

could their dilemma become?! ... Their former life was in the past, their present life was uncertain ... and they dare not even think of the future!

Those disciples had been awake all night, and we know our problems and worries seem to be more intimidating and frightening as we struggle with them in the dark. It was as if the night was never going to end!

Imagine you are out with them now in the fishing boat ... Take a glance over towards the shore ... It might be hazy, but take a *good* look ... Look hard, *really* hard for *Jesus is there!* ... Maybe you might have to focus more but keep looking and you *can* make Him out! ... And very shortly, the darkness of the night and the mist of the morning will begin to lift and clear, and you will see Jesus. ... He is *watching* for you. He is *waiting* for you, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Ps. 30:5).

You see, **the Saviour was waiting** for them. No surprise though, for He had told them He would be **waiting**, *Mk. 14:28* But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. ... At the tomb, and angel told Mary Magdalene and the women with her, *Mk. 16:6* Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup> But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. ... He had given them a promise, and He would keep it! He has already been **waiting**, even when they had been out on the sea. He saw their disappointments. ... He was there before they were! He saw they had nothing in their nets. ... But consider how blessed the disciples were, even in discouragement, for **the Saviour was watching** and **the Saviour was waiting**.

**THE SAVIOUR WAS WORKING** He called out to them a question which would have 'cut them to the quick'! *Jn. 21:5* Children, have ye any meat? ... Like a loving father to his children, "do you not have any fish yet?" ... *He does* be concerned when He sees *us* being concerned. ... Experienced fishermen fishing all night and nothing to show for it! ... Of course, you would be demoralised, and Jesus knew it and so He told them, <sup>6</sup> Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. You see, there *is* a 'right' side and a 'wrong' side ... and the fishermen, - in their despondency were 'fishing' on the '*wrong* side'. ... When it comes to following the Lord, we need to make sure we doing it the 'right' way ... not 'any' way, not 'our' way, but *His* way, which is the only 'right' way. ... The days of these men fishing for fish were over ... and there is no merit in deciding to follow Jesus but looking back. For it to work, it has to be "the world behind me, the cross before me" ... Following the Saviour is all about faith ... and where He takes you next!

Reading on, we must commend the obedience of these faltering disciples for they immediately threw the net over the right-hand side of the boat and they netted a multitude of fishes (v.6). ... There was fish there all the time ... but it was only when Jesus took control, the fish made their way into the net ... and Jesus even had all the fish counted, 153 (v.11)! ... And what a realisation when John told Peter Who He saw and Who was behind it, <sup>7</sup> Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. ... The Saviour had been **watching**, He had been **waiting** ... and now on the shore **the Saviour was working**.<sup>9</sup> As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. The Lord Jesus Himself had gathered the sticks and the coals, and He had been fishing. He had also prepared the bread ... He had everything His faithful followers needed, **Phil. 4:19** my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The Saviour had neither been sleeping, nor had He forgotten them. ... In the background, when the fishermen thought their company with Jesus had ended, He was ahead of them for He had already been preparing for their needs.

Yes, **the Saviour was working** ... quietly, softly, patiently ... even when He would have been tired too. ... And there is something else ... Jesus often spent His nights in prayer (cf. Lk. 6:12), and you can be very sure He had been speaking to His Father about His disciples, and their disappointments. ... And on the shore, **He was watching, He was waiting, and He was working**.

At the beginning of our study, I asked if there are times when you feel you are almost 'at the end of your tether'? ... Jesus had been **watching, waiting, and working** ... but look at those words in v.12, Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. ... *What a welcome!*

The disciples came to land, Thus obeying Christ's command,  
For the Master called unto them, "Come and dine";  
There they found their heart's desire, Bread and fish upon the fire;  
Thus He satisfies the hungry every time.

"Come and dine", the Master calleth, "Come and dine" –  
We can eat and drink of Jesus all the time!  
He's our daily food supply, Only He can satisfy,  
"Come and dine", the Master calleth, "Come and dine".

The fish had been caught, the bread had been baked, the fire was burning ... **Ps.**  
**34:8** O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. ...

Faith in Christ is not an ornament for ‘wearing’ one day of the week and ‘hanging it up in the wardrobe’ for the other six days. Faith in Christ is a living reality relevant to every part of our lives. ... There is nothing concerning you that does not concern the Lord Jesus. There is nothing He does not know about you, - the heartache, pain, sadness, stress. ... He is not only **watching** and **waiting** ... He is also **working**.

But here is something *you* need to do, otherwise this is just theory. ... By faith as a child of God, look along the shore, and keep looking for *He is there* ... No matter how ‘misty’ it is ... keep looking and you *will* see Him ... **watching**, **waiting**, and **working** ... **Prov. 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. **6** In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. **7** Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD ... worship Him, reverence Him ... keep fixed on the Lord!

I am not saying your problems will immediately disappear, - they may, or very possibly they may not. The plain truth is that as long as we are in this world, we shall meet its ‘ups and downs’, - its beautiful ‘green pastures’, and its distressing dark valleys, - ... but what I *am* saying is that when you obey the Lord’s invitation to Come and dine it means you have His company through the fires of affliction. ... And sometimes the fires become awful hot, and you might be exhausted as those disciples were, you might be unsure about many things ... but when you Come and dine with the Master, you are in the company of the One Who has been **watching**, **waiting**, and **working** for you ... in the company of the One Who has called you by your name. He has redeemed you and you are precious to Him ... and He promises, **Is. 43:2** When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. **3** For I am the LORD thy God.

Shortly afterwards, the disciples left their boats and their nets for the last time. By faith, they followed the Lord, no turning back! Some of them enjoyed wonderful experiences in various parts of the ancient world preaching the Gospel, while others were martyred. We have no control over what lies ahead, but God does ... and the final verse of the hymn I quoted assures us ...

Soon the Lamb will take His bride  
To be ever at His side,  
All the host of heaven will assembled be;  
Oh, ’twill be a glorious sight,  
All the saints in spotless white;  
And with Jesus they will feast eternally.

**The Saviour is watching, He is waiting, and He is working.**