

John 21:1-14 “The Call of the New Creation”

1. The geography of the land of Israel is key to understanding this resurrection appearance of Jesus. There is one major source of fresh water in the nation. Water runs off from the mountains in the North, collecting in the sea of galilee. Out of the bottom of the lake flows the Jordan river, travelling down the fertile Jordan valley to empty out into the dead sea where nothing lives. This geography reveals a reality we all see and experience - that life leads to death - sin and death have so marred our earthly reality that every aspect of life socially, relationally, and materially eventually unravels. Where do you see this vivid geographic picture borne out in reality?

This is simply an opening question to get us reflecting on the reality that every aspect of creation has been marred by sin and death. I would encourage you as the leader to go broad rather than deep. As the impact of sin and death is comprehensive and wholistic so to is the call to bring life, to bring healing to every aspect of life marred by sin and death. Once your group has a sense of the breadth of the impact brought to the forefront of their minds move to the next question.

Read Ezekiel 47:1-2; 6b-12

2. In one of the darkest times of Israel's history God gives the prophet Ezekiel a vision of a time where there is a new source of water in the land of Israel – flowing out from the temple it runs into the dead sea and instead of life leading to death this water bring rejuvenation to even the dead sea – lush foliage, teeming aquatic life, such that fisherman cast their nets for bountiful catch. Reflecting on your answer to question 1 above, what would the unravelling of the impact of sin and death look like practically?

Pick some of the areas that generated the most interest and attention in the previous question and speak practically of what the water of life flooding into that aspect of life would look like.

Read John 7:37-39

3. Jesus reflects on the prophecy from Ezekiel here. How does Jesus see the vision coming to fruition?

In Ezekiel the water of life runs out from under the temple. Jesus speaks of the water of life flowing out of the believer's heart. This is a redefinition of temple. The temple, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the place where God and humanity meet is now a temple of flesh and blood, a chosen people.

It will come about by the work of the Spirit – when the Spirit comes this will begin.

The means by which this reality comes about is through faith – trust in Jesus.

Read John 21:1-14

4. The Spirit has been given, descending not upon a temple of wood and stone but a temple of flesh and blood. The Spirit descends on a people, and the first thing that people do is go fishing and cast their nets for a bountiful catch. All of these passages are connected. In light of the connections you have already drawn between the vision from Ezekiel and Jesus' words from John 7 what are followers of Jesus called to be in the world?

Now is the time to connect your answers from questions 1 and 2. The follower of Jesus – chosen by him – empowered by the Spirit is to allow life, allow healing to flow in and through them to address all of the ways that sin and death has marred creation. It is a wholistic and comprehensive call – for example it is - food for the hungry – water for the thirsty – presence to the lonely – justice to the downtrodden – freedom to the captives – good news to those in sin's grip – etc...

5. As Tim expressed in the sermon the story is told in such a way as to reveal the distinctive marks of a people who are engaged in this call. Pick one or two of these marks to reflect on how they shape us to live into the call that Jesus gives to his followers.

The five are:

A. A deep trust that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead (vs. 1, 14)

Jesus wants them to know – he appeared to them many times so that they would be assured.

In John 20:30-31 John has said that the new life that Jesus has offered is made available through our trust in him. If the resurrection is going to change us in any real way, if it's truth and power is to resonate at the deepest recesses of our heart and life – we have to believe that it happened – materially, physically, historically.

If it is simply a spiritual truth then it might have impact on our internal individual spiritual lives but it won't animate our engagement with the material realities of our world.

B. They are brought to a supernatural togetherness by the work of Jesus. (vs. 2)

A reflection on who they were, where they came from, their personalities, convictions, and commitments should reveal to us that it is an absolute miracle that they were together. As an example Tim spoke of Simon the zealot and Matthew the tax collector. The Zealots were a terrorist organization that sought to rid the nation of Romans by any means necessary. They had a murderous intolerance of any who would conspire with the enemy – like tax collectors. How did the two of them ever survive a conversation let

alone three years together? Disciples are held together supernaturally by the work of Jesus.

The church is to be a place where the differences of – race - gender – socio economic status – education – political conviction etc. do not divide us but rather that we are together in spite of those differences bears witness to the new creation.

C. A reliance upon Jesus alone (vs. 6)

Tim spoke of a sin of the Western Church being that of self-reliance – we will trust in our gifts, our methods, our techniques, our competencies above everything else. These professional fisherman take the input of a random stranger and they are on more fish than every before. They are marked by their reliance upon Jesus alone.

D. Hold onto the complementary truths of the gospel – I am so sinful that Jesus had to die for me but so loved that he was glad to die for me. (Luke 5 reaction of Peter “depart from me a sinful man” with reaction in vs. 7) [You may wish to read Luke 5:1-11 to see the stories side by side]

Holding onto these complementary truths of the gospel forms in us a distinctive posture.

There cannot be any whiff of superiority, not “othering” of anyone else, for we see we are all equally in need.

Knowing the embrace of his love and forgiveness it shapes our love, our forgiveness, our embrace of others.

E. Deep intimacy with Jesus who invites us to eat with him. (vs. 12)

The one who washed their feet, died their death, serves them still. Come and eat – I made you breakfast. In the ancient world to eat with another was a pledge of relationship – I want to know you and you to know me – deeply, truly, closely.

The call then comes out of the overflow of our loving relationship with God in Jesus – the order is important to the twin commands of Jesus – love God – love neighbor. As I know the love of God I have the resources, the freedom, the kind of love to love others with.

Read Revelation 22:1-2

6. We will not see the fulness of the promise of Ezekiel until Jesus returns to consummate his kingdom. How does knowing that the fullness is yet to come help us to live in anticipation of this future even now?

This will keep us from the pride that believes we are doing this under our own strength.

It will keep us from the despair when our efforts do not reveal the results we would have hoped for.

It will fix our eyes on the kingdom that Jesus offers rather than having secular and worldly ideas of justice and peace direct us.