

26-0913p Transcript

26-0913p - *Just Fish*, John Nousek

Bible Reader: Tom Freed

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Just Fish

Scripture Reading

Scripture Reading (0:04 - 2:35): Tom Freed John 21:1-14: (0:04) Good evening. I'll be reading John 21, 1-14. (0:10) After these things, Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. (0:18) And he manifested himself in this way. (0:22) Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Canaan and Galilee, (0:28) and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. (0:35) Simon Peter said to them, I am going fishing. (0:39) They said to him, We will also come with you. (0:43) They went out and got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. (0:49) But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach, (0:54) yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. (0:56) So Jesus said to them, Children, you do not have any fish, do you? (1:03) They answered him, No. (1:06) He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find a catch. (1:12) So they cast, and then they were not able to haul in because of the great number of fish. (1:19) Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, (1:23) It is the Lord. (1:26) So when	continued Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, (1:32) for he was stripped for work and threw himself into the sea. (1:36) But the other disciples came in the little boat, and they were not far from the land, (1:43) but about one hour yards away, dragging a net full of fish. (1:49) So when they got out to the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, (1:55) and fish placed on it, and bread. (1:57) Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish with you which you have caught. (2:04) Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, [153]. (2:10) And although there were many, the net was not torn. (2:15) Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast. (2:17) Now the disciples ventured to question him, Who are you? (2:22) Knowing that it was the Lord. (2:24) Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. (2:28) This was now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples (2:33) after he was raised from the dead. (2:35)
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Transcript (0:04 -30:31), Preacher: John Nousek

(2:40) Good evening. (2:42) So that was a long reading. Thank you, Tom. (2:45) Good stuff. (2:47) So tonight's sermon is entitled, Just Fish. (2:55) Just Fish. (2:57) So how many did they catch? (3:02) 153.

(3:04) So I'm going to talk to you about that. (3:08) But first I want to talk to you about how we often remember what seems like small details. (3:18) You might look at that and say, Well, was it 153? (3:22) Was it 144? (3:24) Was it some other? (3:25) What does it matter? (3:26) Is it important? (3:27) Yes, of course.

(3:28) It's in the Scriptures. (3:29) It's very specific. (3:31) God said that he would not allow even a jot or tittle to fall away.

(3:36) And here we have the number. (3:39) It must be important. (3:43) So how do we go about remembering specific details, phrases, or images that draw our attention (3:51) and help us remember these specific things that we need to know? (3:56) So in this passage, the number 153 has significance, and I want to tell you about this.

(4:01) But let me first lay some groundwork. (4:05) I'm going to do so by explaining something about myself. (4:09) See, I've taken a number of standardized tests in my career.

(4:13) I'm an accountant, and I like numbers. (4:15) That's what I do. (4:17) I like to tell people I add and subtract, and they pay me, believe it or not.

(4:20) That's great. (4:21) Wow, I learned that in second grade, and I'm still doing it. (4:25) That's kind of neat.

(4:28) So some of these tests have actually been very, very difficult. (4:32) And in 1998, 1999, I joined some others in a classroom and devoted six months of my life (4:42) to some really focused study in order to pass the CPA exam, which I did. (4:47) It was very difficult.

(4:49) It was brutal. (4:51) And the study included certain memorization tools, and two of them are called mnemonics (5:00) and another is acronym. (5:04) And, see, the early Christians did something very similar to this.

(5:10) They did it with something that they called the Greek. (5:15) In Greek, it's called an ichthys. (5:20) What's an ichthys? (5:23) Well, it's the thing that you try to catch on the end of a hook with a worm.

(5:30) That's the Greek word for fish, ichthys. (5:37) And that's how the early Christians, the Greeks, identified themselves, (5:42) with an image with the word fish. (5:47) And many people today, you might see it on bumper stickers or in the back of a car somewhere, (5:53) you'll see what we'll refer to as a Jesus fish.

(5:57) And I thought to myself, where did that come from? (6:02) Okay, let's think about it. (6:05) See, a mnemonic is a device, a technical device, that makes information easier to recall (6:12) by giving it structure or meaning. (6:15) And it works because the brain remembers patterns, stories, and images more easily (6:22) than simple, arbitrary facts.

(6:27) The book of Jonah is one example. (6:30) We remember the story, but more importantly, we can more easily remember a message. (6:38) See, in the book of Jonah, there are many messages, but just in a word, Jonah.

(6:46) Oh, what are the things that come out of that story? (6:51) Well, you can't run from God. (6:53) God is everywhere. (6:55) He can do the impossible, keeping a man alive inside the belly of a large fish (7:01) for three days and three nights.

(7:03) And then Jonah went to Nineveh, and he thought, this will never work, almost like Columba. (7:13) So he went to Nineveh, and they repented, and God forgave them. (7:20) It's impossible.

(7:22) How could this be? (7:23) Yet, all wrapped up in Jonah. (7:27) You can remember that. (7:30) And so songs are similar in that way.

(7:36) Words come to us much easier, like when we sing the songs, the hymns, tonight. (7:43) You get to know them, and they become familiar, and then they just roll off your tongue. (7:48) You don't even have to think about it.

(7:50) Like, well, wait a minute. (7:52) I've got my eyes closed, and I've got to do the wash tonight, (7:55) and I've got this and that, and all these things, and yet the words just come out. (7:59)

Interesting how that happens.

(8:01) You know, another type of example is children. (8:10) I see two younger ones and one medium-aged one sitting there, (8:17) and we wouldn't ask them to remember or to memorize the alphabet. (8:26) I need you to memorize the alphabet.

(8:30) Oh, where do I start? (8:32) I forgot. (8:33) No. (8:34) Instead, I want you to sing your ABCs, and it works.

(8:40) There's something magical, almost, about how that happens. (8:44) It's like the rhythm of the words and how it sounds, and it just sticks. (8:53) See, mnemonics do that.

(8:55) That's what they're there for. (8:56) They're helping you to remember key facts, like 153. (9:01) What's it about? (9:03) What does it demonstrate? (9:04) What's it trying to tell you? (9:06) I'll give you a couple more quick examples.

(9:09) You may have heard, may remember this. (9:12) My very educated mother just served us nine pizzas. (9:20) Well, what's that tell you? (9:21) That's how you remember the planets in the solar system.

(9:25) My very educated mother, Mercury, Venus, the one we're on, Earth, Mars, on and on. (9:36) Or her notes for the notes on the line of a treble clef. (9:43) Same thing.

(9:43) We sing. (9:44) We have notes. (9:46) We sing out loud.

(9:47) Every good boy does find, E-G-B-D-F. (9:52) Well, try to remember that. (9:54) Well, every good boy does find.

(9:55) It's a lot easier to remember. (9:59) And then there's an acronym. (10:03) An acronym is similar to that, and it's also a memory device.

(10:09) But this one is taking the first letter of each word that's to be memorized (10:17) and turn it into a single word that is quickly memorized. (10:22) For instance, here, fish. (10:24) A fish has a significance.

(10:26) F-I-S-H is how we spell it in English, in Greek. (10:31) Instead of four letters, they use five. (10:37) An example of that you might remember.

(10:40) How do you remember the five Great Lakes? (10:46) HOMES. (10:46) H-O-M-E-S. (10:51) Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior.

(10:55) HOMES. (10:56) That's the tool. (11:00) Or SCUBA.

(11:02) Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus. (11:07) All these little tricks, but they work. (11:11) So, acronyms are primarily used to simplify long names or phrases or ideas (11:17) and make them easier and quicker to communicate and remember.

(11:23) Now, this sermon is called Just Fish. (11:28) So, let's fish. (11:32) Let me show you the ichthys.

(11:42) Call it the Jesus fish. (11:46) In the upper right on screen, you see the Jesus fish, as we would call it. (11:52) And inside, there are five Greek letters.

(11:57) And those Greek letters spell the word fish in Greek. (12:03) And each one of those letters stands for a Greek word, (12:09) which translates into an English word. (12:14) There will be a quiz.

(12:21) So, the letters in Greek. (12:24) The first one looks like a capital I. (12:26) It's called an iota. (12:28) It's translated as Jesus, in English, Jesus.

(12:35) The X is pronounced chi, stands for Christos in Greek, in English, Christ. (12:43) The next one's the circle with the dash through it. (12:47) That's called a theta.

(12:49) A theo, and it means of God. (12:55) The Y is upsilon, and the Greek word is ulias, which means sun. (13:03) And finally, a little squiggly, just like a fish, called a sigma.

(13:10) And the Greek word is sorter, which translates into savior. (13:16) So, in a symbol, in a single symbol, we pack all this information in. (13:23) We have Jesus Christ of God, Savior, Son.

(13:30) So, now we have the Jesus fish. (13:34) And it is, as we would pronounce it, an ixus. (13:41) So, let's get back to the swimmers.

(13:45) 153. (13:47) So, we read the first of two passages, and the second passage I'd like to read to you now. (13:53) It's very similar.

(13:56) See, we listened to the passage in John 21. (14:04) I'm going to read to you the New King James, Luke 5. (14:10) It's also about the same length, a little shorter. (14:14) So, bear with me.

(14:15) But it's Luke 5, verses 1 through 11. (14:22) So it was, as the multitude pressed about him to hear the word of God, (14:27) that he stood by the lake of Gennesaret and saw two boats standing by the lake, (14:34) but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. (14:39) Then he got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, (14:43) asked him to put out a little from the land, (14:47) and he sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

(14:52) When he had stopped speaking, he said to Simon, (14:55) launch out into the deep and flip down your nets for a catch. (15:03) But Simon answered and said to him, (15:05) Master, we have toiled all night but caught nothing. (15:12) Nevertheless, at your word I will let down the net.

(15:16) And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish (15:21) and their net was breaking. (15:23) So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. (15:28) And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink.

(15:36) When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, (15:39) Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. (15:45) And he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken. (15:53) And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

(15:59) And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid. (16:04) From now on you will catch men. (16:08) So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed him.

(16:17) Now you'll notice in these two passages there's many similarities. (16:24) Similar people are in the boat in each case. (16:30) Peter, James, John, they went out fishing all night.

(16:39) They had no success. They caught nothing in both accounts. (16:47) Jesus instructed them, Try again.

(16:55) And when they did, they caught many fish. (17:00) But there's many critical differences in these two accounts. (17:04) First of all, these are two separate events.

(17:09) See, the account that I just read to you is at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (17:17) when he's still calling the disciples becoming apostles. (17:24) And the passage that we read or we heard from John was after the resurrection, several years apart. (17:40) So how many were caught in Luke 5, what I just read? (17:48) It just says many.

(17:52) And notice the nets were breaking. (17:56) The net was not sufficient to hold what was caught in the net. (18:02) See, we're described all over the place in the Scripture as the people of the earth, (18:12) the people of the world are described as the fish.

(18:16) And the net is trying to scoop up everything, but not everything is willing. (18:26) And the nets, they wind up falling apart. (18:32) But in John 21, notice that there's a specific and limited number, 153.

(18:37) The nets are not breaking after the resurrection. (18:43) The net was sufficient, the number is limited. (18:49) Now I'm going to make the case, and I'm convinced, as many times in Scripture there is, (18:58) there's imagery involved here, as well as the actual account of what happened.

(19:05) See, the breaking net represents the unfinished message of Christ. (19:15) And the unnumbered fish is the whole world. (19:21) Many, unfortunately, being unsuited for the kingdom.

(19:27) And I say this because I read in Matthew 4. (19:31) This is Matthew 4, 18 to 20. (19:35) And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Matthew 4. (19:45) Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea. (19:52) For they were fishermen.

(19:54) Then he said to them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (20:03) Not fishers of fish, fishers of men. (20:08) They immediately left their nets and followed him.

(20:15) I've read that before, and I have to tell you, when I read that, (20:20) I often heard in my mind, they immediately left their nets and followed him. (20:28) Of course. (20:30) And I focused on the nets.

(20:33) Wait a minute, that's true. (20:38) But I recently realized it says their nets, their nets. (20:46) Not what Jesus Christ is going to lay out in his ministry and how he captures and how he separates the goats from the sheep.

(21:00) In this narrative, we see the imagery of the people of the world being represented by the fish (21:06) and the discarding of one net for something else. (21:13) See, later in John 21, after the resurrection, the apostles are still fishermen, (21:23) but they're going to use a different kind of net to, if you will, reel them in. (21:32) The net which does not break in John 21 represents the completed message of our Lord, (21:39) as the Jesus fish describes the same Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

(21:49) The 153 fish represent those that belong to Christ. (21:58) So why 153? (22:04) What's the significance of that? (22:08) Well, many different commentaries exist on this perplexing question. (22:20) And I suppose if I was able, I could devote another six months of study specifically to that.

(22:32) But I will give you this. (22:34) There's a couple of quick points. (22:40) And this might be on

the quiz.

(22:45) Jerome was a fourth century, call him church father. (22:57) He was a primary contributor, translator of what's called the Vulgate. (23:07) And he read about the 153 fish in John 21, 11.

(23:18) And he contemplated the same thing. (23:20) And he cited someone that I was not familiar with. (23:26) He cited an ancient Greco-Roman naturalist by the name of Opian, (23:33) who was a second century, lived in the second century.

(23:40) And this person, Opian, wrote something he called the, and I struggle to pronounce it correctly, (23:47) but it's called, I think, the Haliutica. (23:54) And it's a five-book didactic epic on fishing. (24:06) And Opian claimed that there were exactly 153 known species of fish in the world.

(24:15) Isn't that interesting? (24:19) All the species have been represented. (24:22) All the people from the earth have been represented, if they're willing. (24:33) Here's another interesting fact, which will take more study, arguably, much more study.

(24:46) However, 153 is an interesting number. (24:48) You know, I told you, I'm an accountant, so I like numbers, and just the way they work. (24:55) 153 is known as a triangular number, or a factorial, a mathematical factorial, (25:05) which means if you take the number one, and you add it to the number two, (25:11) and you add it to the number three, and four, and five, on and on it goes, (25:16) all the way up to number 17, you get 153.

(25:23) Okay. Interesting fact. (25:26) Is it relevant? (25:28) Well, let me tell you, there are also a couple of other instances (25:34) where we have numbers given to us in the pages of Scripture that have significance.

(25:44) And they're not just general round numbers, 5,000, 100,000, things like that. (25:52) In the book of Acts, chapter 27, 37, Paul's about to be shipwrecked. (26:01) That's the account of the shipwreck.

(26:05) And it says there were a specific number of people on board, 276. (26:14) I've read that before, and I thought to myself, (26:20) when's the last time I was on a boat, and I counted all the people, (26:22) and found out how many there were, and I wrote it down, 276. (26:32) Interesting, 276 is also a triangular number.

(26:37) It's 1, plus 2, plus 3, plus 4, plus 5, on and on, until you get to plus 26. (26:47) It's 276. (26:50) And similarly, in the book of Revelation, (26:56) there's a significant number that even those outside the church would probably recognize.

(27:04) In Revelation 13, 18, the number is 666. (27:18) That's also a triangular number. (27:21) It's 1, plus 2, plus 3, plus 4, plus, plus, until you get to plus 26.

(27:28) And that equals 666. (27:33) There's something there. (27:36) And as I stand here right now, I cannot answer that entirely.

(27:39) If I spent the next six months, I probably could answer that very well. (27:49) But I'm here to tell you that God's Word is very specific. (28:00) And He's given us everything we need, right down to the smallest detail.

(28:08) So that we know, for example, and I'm going to read this to you, Matthew 25. (28:15)

Matthew 25, 31 to 33. (28:18) When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, (28:26) then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

(28:31) All the nations will be gathered before Him. (28:37) You see the imagery? (28:39) You see it almost like the net. (28:42) All the people have been gathered before Him.

(28:46) And He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. (28:54) And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. (29:04) And I've read that before, and I have to tell you, I find it so interesting.

(29:12) That even in today's environment, there are those people that would consider themselves on the right. (29:20) And those that would consider themselves leftists. (29:32) Those who claim to want to preserve our nation, adhere to our laws, (29:38) often keeping godly freedom and liberty in place.

(29:45) Often refer to themselves as those on the right. (29:52) While those who claim that it's best to centralize power into just a few hands of men, (30:00) abolish laws, advocating, even most recently in the United States, (30:05) total anarchy and atheism refer to themselves as leftists. (30:19) That's what we see today.

(30:22) That's what I see when I talk to folks. (30:28) When I listen to folks. (30:32) So the net you want to be part of is the one that's thrown on the right side of the boat.

(30:45) That's the one. (30:49) This is the net you want to be caught in. (30:57) And I'll finish right here by saying, if you have found yourself swimming somewhere other than (31:05) under the instruction and protection of our Lord Jesus Christ, or have any other need, (31:13) please say so now. (30:31)