

The Word became flesh

The playfulness of Jesus

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“In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God... The **Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
John 1:1, 14

This Christmas let's focus all of our attention on Jesus.

We will not be considering the usual cast of characters of the Christmas drama.

This year I am going to ignore: Mary and Joseph, the angels, Herod, the wise men, and even the inn keeper. Not a word about: Christmas cheer, Santa, elves, presents, or chestnuts roasting on an open fire.

This Christmas season and beyond, we are just going to experience Jesus.

“Reading the Gospels without knowing the personality of Jesus is like watching television with the sound turned off. The effect is dry, two dimensional person saying strange, undecipherable things.

But when we discover his true character – this man who made the wind, music, and flying squirrels – suddenly all of the remarkable qualities of Jesus burst forth with color and brilliance like fireworks.”

These messages are adaptations from the Book, Beautiful Outlaw, by John Eldredge.

“The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simple this: We want you to enjoy this, too.” 1 John 1:2-4 The Message

The goal of this series is not to just describe Jesus. The goal is to experience him. More words about Jesus are helpful only if they bring us to an experience of him.

How do you see Jesus? Most of us have grown up with a rather twisted, distant, sterile, Sunday School picture sort of view of Jesus. May hope and prayer is that we will lose that image and see Jesus as he was and is...

A simple prayer will loose the encounters with Jesus like a landslide:

“Jesus, I ask you for you. For the real you.”

To have Jesus, really have him, is to have the greatest treasure in all the world. To love Jesus – that is to settle the first question of human existence. Of your existence. Everything else flows from there.

Now, loving Jesus will not be a problem when you know him as he truly is.

The Playfulness of God

This episode takes place a week or so AFTER Jesus saunters out of the tomb he borrowed.

John 21:1-12

1. The boys have gone fishing. Can you blame them?

The events of the past 2 weeks have been overwhelming. The emotional high of the triumphal entry – palm branches waving, crowds shouting “hosanna!” – all came crashing down as they watched in horror as their beloved Jesus was tortured, executed and entombed.

But then – fantastic beyond imagining – Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them twice before. Though at this moment the disciples aren’t really sure where he is.

Not sure what to do they decide to do what any self-respecting fisherman would: Go fishing. Apparently, fishing naked or close to it – notice that Peter needed to put his clothes back on.

2. Notice how casually Jesus enters the scene.

His best friends don’t even know its him. This is the resurrected Lord, mind you. Ruler of the heavens and the earth. He seems to be hiding. He seems to be playing with his buddies.

He could have announced “It is I, the Lord! Come thou to me!” But he doesn’t. He does the opposite. He simply stands on the shore with his hands in his pockets like a tourist and asks the question people like to ask of fishermen, “Catch anything?”

The nonchalance of the risen Christ is absolutely intriguing.

Setting the stage:

1. Jesus must have been in a great mood.

He has just conquered death, ransomed mankind, been restored to his Father, his friends and redeemed the entire cosmos. He is in the afterglow of the greatest triumph of the greatest battle in the history of the universe.

But his buddies – up all night, blurry eyed, exhausted and nothing to show for their efforts. They could use some cheering up.

2. How did some of his buddies first meet Jesus?

It was here, along the shore of this lake. Possibly this very spot, knowing how fisherman tend to keep their boat near their favorite spot.

Let’s go back and look at their first meeting, years earlier....

Luke 5:4,6-7,11

So this has happened before.

Later on can you picture all of the guys sitting around a fire somewhere remembering this event and poking fun at Peter with a smirk—“Hey, Peter, remember this.... “go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man,” and they all crack-up laughing about it for the 100th time?

Now 3 1/2 years later the famous disciples have pulled another all-nighter at the same beach and have been skunked again...and Jesus does it again.

“Try the other side.” It is how he let them know that it was him. This has all the wink of an inside joke. That rich treasure of friendship, the running gag between mates where all you need to do is start the first line and everyone cracks up all over again.

“Try the other side.” Another jackpot. Just like the good old days. Nothing more needs to be said – Peter is already in the water swimming to the shore.

Do you see the playfulness of Jesus here with his best friends? His timing, the tension, his hiddenness, a touristlike question, the same lame suggestion from somebody they think knows nothing about fishing, then BANG! – the catch! And the band of brother has been reunited again.

And by the way – the little detail John tosses in – that the catch was 153 fish ... is a beautiful touch.

Not “a boatload of fish”
Not “about 150”
Nor “over a gross”

I think this is one of the most remarkable statistic ever computed. Think about it... here we have the resurrected Savior of the world Reunited with his buddies and the exact number of fish in the net is revealed.

Two possible scenarios:

The disciples...ignore Jesus while the sit next to the pile of fish, countingone, two, three, four, five, six, seven....

Or

These retired fisherman, overcome with joy of seeing Jesus, leave the writhing pile where it is, fully intending to get to it right after breakfast. Having had the cookout- which Jesus grilled – one of them says, “well, we oughta get that catch counted up,” and a second one says, “Yep,” and Jesus, reaching for a last bite of roasted tilapia, says, “There’s a hundred fifty-three.”

The boys smile at one another, realizing, Oh yeah, right – He’s back!

Anyway you look at it, it is a beautiful story.
Playful, funny, so human, so hopeful, so unreligious.

And it is that playful quality that gives the passage its true character for knowing Jesus as he really is. The man is not religious. If he were, the story would have taken place in a religious setting – the temple or at least a synagogue and Jesus would have gather them for a Bible study or prayer meeting. Jesus never even show up at the temple after his resurrection.

He is at the beach, catching his boys fishing, filling empty nets and then having them to breakfast, where I would imagine, they laugh and laughed and joke until they cried.

God knows how and when to be playful – with us. It’s like a breath of fresh air.