

## Purpose – John 21:1-14

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Sweet Spot*

1. You stand at the plate, eyeing the pitcher for a clue to what kind of pitch he's going to throw.
    - a. Fastball, curve, slider, or change-up?
    - b. He gives a small tell by dropping his left shoulder – it's a fastball.
  2. He starts his windup & delivers. Sure enough, it's a fastball & you've started your swing at exactly the right time, pulling that bat around with all you've got.
  3. The ball is right down the middle, waist high. The bat connects & without looking you know it's outta' here!
  4. You're nearly to first base before the ball hits the ground.

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  5. The engineer who made this bat designed it with a "sweet spot;" the place where it would produce the greatest distance.
    - a. Any batter will tell you if you miss that sweet spot, the hit just doesn't "feel" right.
    - b. You get a pop up, or the dreaded full-swing bunt.
    - c. If you make contact too far in, though it's been a mighty swing, the ball barely makes it back to the pitcher.
    - d. If you connect too far out you can get a wrenching jolt that shakes your teeth loose.
  6. A golf club has a sweet spot – much smaller than a baseball bat.
    - a. Golf *looks* like an easy sport to an observer.
    - b. One round of golf will quickly teach another lesson – it's tough!
    - c. There's a good reason so few make it to the Pro tour.
    - d. If you miss the sweet spot on that club face by even a tiny bit, your shot is in the weeds or water.
    - e. But oh! If you hit it dead on – You start dreaming about endorsements & challenging Tiger for the US Open.
  7. A tennis racket has a sweet spot.
    - a. When you hit it, you hardly notice you've made contact with the ball, yet it flies like a rocket right where you want it to go.
    - b. Miss it, & the racket twists in your hand while the ball shanks off over the fence.
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#### B. *Finding The Sweet Spot*

1. This bat, golf club, tennis racket & you all have one thing in common - a sweet spot.
2. Just as each of these was designed with a place where they function at their optimal best - so God designed **YOU** with a sweet spot.
  - a. He has a plan & place for you. You were created for a specific reason, with a distinct role to play.
  - b. Now, you can take the life God has given you & live it for something *else*,
  - c. But like hitting the ball in the wrong place, you're going to find life little more than a series of outs.

- d. Instead of sailing long & straight down the fairway of life you'll hook into the weeds or slice into the traps.
- 4. This is something **every** follower of Christ must learn.
  - a. We are all individual & unique. And God has placed a **specific calling** on each & every one of us.
  - b. Your calling is not mine; nor mine, yours.
- 5. Each of us needs to find our sweet spot, what God designed us for, and live there!
- 6. We see this illustrated in our text today.

## II. TEXT

### A. Vs. 1-3

**<sup>1</sup>After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.**

- 1. During an earlier appearance, Jesus told the disciples to stay put in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit had come upon them. That took place on the Day of Pentecost, 7 weeks later.
- 2. The problem was, the disciples had **no** idea what Jesus was talking about.
  - a. The filling of the Holy Spirit was totally outside both their experience & understanding.
  - b. Jesus didn't say **when** the promise would be fulfilled or describe what would happen.
  - c. He simply said to wait for it; they would know what He was referring to when it happened.
  - d. In the meantime, they must trust Him & be patient.
- 3. Peter grew impatient. He wasn't the "sit around & wait" kind of guy.

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- 4. Not long ago I took a test for a special class I'm in called *The Masters Program*.
  - a. The test aims at discovering what a person's strengths are.
  - b. It identified 5 main traits that I have to say seemed to paint a pretty accurate picture of me.
  - c. But 1 in particular gave me goose bumps it was so accurate.

You have a constant need for **achievement**. For you, every day starts at zero. By the end of the day you **must** achieve something tangible in order to feel good about that day. And by "every day" you mean **every single day**-workdays, weekends, vacations. No matter how much you may need a day of rest, if the day passes without **some form** of achievement, no matter how small, you feel dissatisfied. You have an internal fire burning inside you. It pushes you to do **more**. After each accomplishment is reached, the fire dwindles for a moment, but very soon it rekindles itself, forcing you toward the next accomplishment. Your relentless need for achievement might not be logical. It might not even be

focused. But it will always be with you. You must learn to live with this whisper of discontent. It does have its benefits. It brings you the energy you need to work long hours without burning out. It's the jolt you can always count on to get you started on new tasks, new challenges. It's the power supply that causes you to set the pace and define the levels of productivity for your team. It's the theme that keeps you moving.

- e. That's so me, it's *scary*!
6. I'm convinced it was the same for Peter.
  - a. He wasn't the kind of guy to just sit around twiddling his thumbs.
  - b. He's the one who jumped out of the boat & tried walking on water,
  - c. Who jumped at Jesus' question about Who we was,
  - d. Who drew his sword in Gethsemane,
  - e. And who went running at Mary's report of the empty tomb to see for himself.
7. Even though Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem, Peter got itchy for action; & not knowing what *else* to do, did the one thing He *did* know – *went fishing*.
8. Now, this is interesting, because Jesus had told the disciples *He* was going back to the Father & turning His mission over to them.
  - a. He'd already imparted the Holy Spirit to indwell them; they were born again at this point.
  - b. But as Pete sat in Jerusalem day after day, he realized continuing Jesus' mission was way beyond his capacity.
  - c. He knew he was *different* & that the Holy Spirit had created new life in him.
  - d. But he also knew he *didn't possess* the *anointing* needed to do what Jesus had done.
9. He'd been a fisherman *before* being a disciple & now that his discipleship seemed over, what else was there but to go *back* to fishing?
10. So he voiced his thoughts to the other 6 & they agree to head back to their familiar stomping grounds in Galilee.
11. John & James' father Zebedee owned a successful fishing enterprise on the Lake of Gennesaret, called here the Sea of Tiberias, so it wasn't hard for them to find a boat.
12. But after a long night of fishing, they had nothing to show for it.

#### **B. Vs. 4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No."**

1. Just as the first rays of dawn broke over the eastern hills, the guys in the boat heard a voice calling from shore.
  - a. He called them "Children" – the word refers to *young ones*; *little* children.
  - b. This is another of the many clues that point to young age of the disciples; they were probably in their late teens.
  - c. But John loved to weave *multiple meanings* into the words he chose, & Jesus' use of the word "Children" for the disciples also was an indication of

their *spiritual infancy*.

- d. They've only been born again a short time,
  - e. And their presence in a boat on a lake in Galilee, *fishing* –
  - f. Instead of waiting patiently in Jerusalem as Jesus had instructed reveals how *immature* they are in the things of God.
2. Because they're in the wrong place, at the wrong time, doing the wrong thing, their nets are empty.
  3. Jesus didn't ask, "Have you any food?" In Greek it's, "You *don't* have any food, do you?"
  4. Now – ask any fisherman & he'll tell you – IF he's been fishing for hours & has nothing to show for it, he DREADS the inevitable question of those who pass by – "Caught anything?"
  5. Their reply is a simple – "Nope!"

**6** And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

6. Keep in mind they don't know it's Jesus; He's just some guy standing on the shore a hundred yards away.
7. When He told them to cast their net again, they assumed he was able to see a school of fish they couldn't.
8. They threw out the cast net & immediately it was full of fish.

### C. Vs. 7-10

**7** Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea.

1. The huge catch reminded John of a similar experience 3 years before.
2. Being the sharp guy he was, he drew the right conclusion; the man on the shore must be the Lord.
3. Peter, less perceptive but wired for action, couldn't wait for the boat to make its way to shore & dove in.
4. Peter had stripped down to his underwear as he fished.<sup>[1]</sup> But decorum demanded full dress when you greeted someone, so he took up his outer garment & waded to shore.

**8** But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.

**9** Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. **10** Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

5. When the others got there they found breakfast cooking. Jesus invited them add some of their own catch.

### D. Vs. 11-13

**11** Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net

**was not broken.**

1. The top of the net was attached to the rail of the boat while the bulk of it was still in the water, keeping the fish fresh.
2. Peter went up into the boat, loosed the net & dragged it to shore.
3. In a classic display of the fisherman's ethic, John tells us there were 153 large fish – oh, & the net didn't break!
  - a. The catch was always counted so each fisherman would get his proper share.
  - b. **Plus**, fishermen have always loved to preserve the details of those *special catches*, those times when the big one **DIDN'T** get away.
  - c. Go to any boathouse, bait shack, snack shop, or cafeteria near a lake & you'll see a wall covered with pictures of people grinning from ear to ear, holding their prize catch. Under it is the person's name, the date and the length and weight of their fish.
  - d. Fishermen will sit & talk about special catches for hours.
    - 1) How they caught their limit in 20 minutes.
    - 2) Or how they landed a 20 lb'er using 4 lb test line.

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4. John's just showing himself to be a true fisherman here – it was 153 large fish & the net didn't break!
5. Oh my – how the commentators love to find some deep spiritual significance in the 153 fish! Their speculations go from the mildly interesting to the utterly absurd.
6. John gives **no clue** to some deeper significance here. It's best to just see this as a fisherman's record of the catch.
7. What's the **real** point here? What are **we** to learn from this miracle?
  - a. They'd spent a night of fruitless labor in their own prowess & strength.
  - b. It's not that they'd gotten rusty in their fishing skills.
  - c. Their nets were empty because **God had turned the fish away**.
  - d. The reason God blocked their success was because they weren't supposed to be catching fish any longer. They were supposed to be catching people.
    - 1) Remember Jesus' promise & call on Peter 3 years before?
    - 2) "Follow Me, & I will make you a fisher of **men**."
  - e. They weren't called to a lake in Galilee to make a living, they were called to all the world to make disciples.
  - f. They weren't called to steer a boat, but to steer the Church through its first crucial years.
  - g. They weren't called to cast string nets, but the Gospel.
8. So their nets came up empty – **until** they sent them out at the direction of the Lord; then they filled to capacity.
9. When we follow God's direction, no matter how contrary to experience it seems,
  - a. No matter how opposed to common sense it appears,
  - b. No matter what conventional wisdom or the way of the world dictates,
  - c. When we do things the Lord's way – **Life works!**
    - 1) That's not to say there aren't difficulties & challenges; there are, **plenty** of them.

- 2) But when we go about life God's way, even the hard things turn out to be blessings.
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10. What happened here taught the disciples they *could* go back to fishing if they wanted.
- They *could* go back to the same'o/same'o if they chose.
  - But if they did, they'd only see a meager return on all they did.
  - Their lives would be marked by failure & disappointment instead of success & a sense of significance; the sense that they had *made a difference!*
11. This taught them that if they will just heed the Lord & do what He says, no matter how simple or strange it may seem, things work out really well.
- 12** Jesus said to them, **"Come and eat breakfast."** Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, **"Who are You?"**—knowing that it was the Lord. **13** Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.
12. They *hesitated* when Jesus invited them to eat, so He took the food *to* them.
13. John tells us their hesitation was due to their lack of confidence in knowing if it *really was Jesus*.
14. All 4 of the Gospels make it clear that there was something very different about the appearance of Christ *after* the Resurrection.
- We touched on this last Wednesday.
  - Mary Magdalene didn't recognize Jesus at the tomb Rez Sunday morning.
  - When he appeared to the 2 on the way to Emmaus, *they* didn't recognize Him.
  - When He later that evening appeared to the 11, they were uncertain of Who He was *until* He showed them His wounds.
  - How do we account for this lack of recognition? Jesus was in His *resurrection* body.
    - 1) People often ask how *old* they'll be in heaven. What they mean is; what will they **LOOK** like?
    - 2) They'll look exactly as God *intended* them to be; as if sin had never marred creation.
  - Since *our* resurrection is patterned after Jesus'. We can conclude His resurrection body looked very different from the body they'd grown accustomed to over the 3 years they'd followed Him.
  - The one difference between our eternal, spiritual body & Jesus' will be, as we see in the Gospels, He carries the wounds of the crucifixion with Him as eternal reminders of what our presence there cost God.
  - It was the showing of His wounds after the Rez that convinced those who saw Him it really *was* Him.
15. That's what we're seeing here. Just as the 2 in Emmaus recognized Jesus as He handed them bread, and they saw the nail prints in His hands,
16. As Jesus handed them these file-t-o'-fish sandwiches there on the shore, they realized it truly was Him.

### III. CONCLUSION

### **A. Much, Much More**

1. After this encounter in Galilee, they went back to Jerusalem to wait for the filling of the Spirit as Jesus promised.
  2. Peter had learned his lesson, a lesson *we must all learn*.
    - a. He was a fisherman *no longer* – Now, he was an apostle.
    - b. He had a *new* career & calling & the only success or satisfaction he would ever know was when he was living in his sweet spot, doing what he'd been *created* for.
  3. Peter *could* have moved back to Capernaum & lived a safe, saved life as a commercial fisherman.
  4. But if he'd made that choice, he'd have been continually haunted by the awareness he'd been made for more; much, much more than catching fish.
  5. The man or woman who's designed to win souls to God will never find contentment in merely cleaning fish.
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### **B. Your Sweet Spot**

1. Understand something – Some Christians *are* called by God to be commercial fishermen.
  - a. It just wasn't Peter's, or John's, or James' calling!
  - b. God doesn't call everyone to be an Apostle in the sense they were.
  - c. No – He does call some to be mechanics, carpenters, clerks, CPA's, brokers, agents, consultants, a domestic engineer AKA = wife, mother.
2. When Jesus said that we're to go into all the world & make disciples, He wasn't referring to *geography*. World = *ethnos*; people groups.
3. So God *will* call some of us to be waitresses, models, truck drivers, actors, politicians, & sheriffs so He can spread the Good News of JC among the lost wherever they're found.
4. The key is to discover what *your* calling *is*.
5. Whatever your calling – that's your *sweet spot*.
  - a. That's where life comes together & flows so well.
  - b. Even when it's difficult & there are problems, you know you're in the right place doing the right thing & that it's all going to work out.
6. Just as Peter went back to fishing, once *we're* born again, we *can* carry on in pretty much the same mode as before, only now with the hope of heaven.
  - a. We quit those things we know grieve the Lord.
  - b. But nothing about our career or hobbies or core lifestyle changes much.
  - c. We cling to Jesus as *Savior* but never bring ourselves before Him as *Lord*, seeking to discover if He has something *different* for us.
  - d. We just keep fishing, because it's what we've always done, it's how we see ourselves.
  - e. If we settle for that, then we settle for *mediocrity*, & the abundance we can enjoy in Christ NOW will *never* be ours.
7. Christian - Discover your calling! Find out what God created you for – then do it!
8. Here's how you can discover your calling: Ask God.
  - a. Ask Him to make clear to you both inwardly through the witness of the Spirit & through the circumstances of your life what He created you to be

- & do here & now.
- b. Ask Him to make clear to you what both your spiritual & natural gifts are, because God always gives us the equipment we need to fulfill His calling.
9. Here's what *we can do for one another* in this regard – Value, honor & esteem one another.
  10. Don't fall into the trap of thinking one calling is higher or greater than another.
  11. The only issue is faithfulness to whatever our calling is.

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[1] Greek word is *gumnos*; naked, or to remove excess garments to facilitate work