

What Jesus already has (John 21:1-19)

Why does he want the disciples to catch fish?

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Jesus is so funny sometimes.

The disciples have gone fishing but have come up empty. Jesus, who they do not recognize, stands on the shore and asks if they have any fish. We know the story: Jesus tells them to let down their net, they comply, and suddenly they have a bunch of fish.

But what gets me is not that the disciples come up with a net full of fish. The clincher for me comes in verse 9, when we see a fire of burning coals cooking what? Fish! Jesus already has fish and bread.

But didn't Jesus just ask them for fish? Yes and no. He asked if they *had* any fish. Which might lead us to believe that Jesus himself doesn't have any—if he did, he would share them with the disciples. Right? I mean, if your main buddy has something that you need, do you think he's going to make you work all night, after you've already pulled a double shift, when he could easily share his goodies with you from the jump?

But Jesus apparently operates differently—and that's a good thing. Because sometimes we rely on others so much that we do not know the value of our own efforts. Jesus is certainly a provider. But he's also a teacher, and here he teaches his disciples the meaning of grit.

The disciples obey Jesus' instruction to combine the efforts of their labor (the fish) with what he already possesses. Only then are they ready to commune with Jesus over breakfast—and to move into their deeper purpose. After asking Peter, the lead fisherman and arguably the most vocal apostle, if he loves him, Jesus gives his divine directives. First, “feed my sheep.” And then, “follow me.”

So after toiling all night long, Peter and the other disciples

- listen to Jesus and let down their nets,
- reap the benefits of their obedience,
- combine their blessing with what Jesus already has, and
- are now ready to serve others by following in the footsteps and teachings of Jesus.

The Lord has led by example, and now it's time for the disciples to step up to the plate.

When we're about to throw in the towel, we can remember that the Lord still provides. Jesus has already prepared a table for us. Will we give up our place at the table, our opportunity to commune with our Lord, by failing to respond to his word? Will we then forfeit our purpose and calling to be the agents of change in God's kingdom? God is saying, “I've got you.” Even in seasons when scarcity seems to reign, we can rest assured in this.

- *Lisa Jenkins*