

## The Mist Lifts

### John 21: 1 – 14

Last Sunday I spoke about how Jesus appeared to his disciples when they were all together in a locked room – how Jesus came and stood among them and pronounced a blessing over them, saying “*peace be with you.*” John even mentions that Jesus breathed on them and said, “*Receive the Holy Spirit.*”

In that message, I highlighted the three vitally important and essential gifts that Jesus gave his disciples during that particular encounter:

First and foremost, **His peace** which came in the form of our forgiveness and reconciliation with His Father, our Creator - the cost being the price of His shed blood

Second, **His power**, which came, at least temporarily in the form of the Holy Spirit. (In Acts chapter 2 we read about the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit on the disciples in a more permanent and transformative way leading to miraculous results including the birth of the church.

Finally, **His purpose**: “*As the Father is sending me, I am sending you.*” As Christians we are called to receive God’s peace, live it out boldly by offering God’s peace to a peace - starved world. And we can only do this when we submit to the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit who operates in and through us and whose ultimate goal it is to bring glory and honor and praise to the One who deserves it all.

To a Christian, receiving these three gifts into our lives is absolutely essential and would be comparable to a race car driver receiving a brand-new race car with a full tank of gas and a GPS system that would flawlessly direct him to the finish line. All we have to do is get behind the wheel, flip the switch, and step on the gas.

Without these three gifts: God's peace and power and purpose, we cannot even get off the starting line. In fact, without these three gifts, we can't even call ourselves Christians. It would be like looking under the hood of a car and discovering a big gaping hole where the motor's supposed to be.

I think that this might be the problem for a lot of people who call themselves Christians today, but have had a very difficult time trying to live the Christian life. They never bothered looking under the hood to see if God's motor is there. Instead, they try to pursue power and purpose and peace apart from God, using their own limited power and worldly wisdom, and in doing so, end up living fruitless, empty, and purposeless lives.

And I ask you ... is there anything more troubling and pathetic than this?

I can't think of any, and when we encounter someone like this, I hope our hearts break for them, and we're moved by divine compassion to pray for them and help them. This is our Christian mission. This is our call to love one another – and we can do this... if the mist lifts and our vision becomes clear.

Yes, you heard me right. When the mist lifts we can be what God wants us to be because we can get a clear view of God.

We can recognize him - recognize his voice, his kindness, his forgiveness in his words, and his love for us in his eyes and recognize the invitation he has for us to serve and love him and be his ambassador on earth.

Maybe this is what happened in John 21 when Jesus called out from the Sea of Galilee's shoreline to his disciples:

“Hey fellas, did you have any success?

Did you catch anything?

Did you achieve your goal?

Perhaps Jesus was calling out through the early morning Sea of Galilee mist.

And in his calling, perhaps little by little the mist began to lift.

Just the other day I was driving to Port Huron heading due East on 69 not much after the sun came up, and quite frankly, I couldn't go my typical 5 – 7 miles over the speed limit due to foggy conditions.

The fog or mist, as I like to call it, impaired my vision, and my headlights just weren't cutting it. I drove in this condition for a few miles and began wondering if the weather was going to let up. Eventually it did, and when it happened, I found myself thanking God for lifting the mist and curing my vision.

I know this is going to sound corny, but I'm going to say it anyway ...

Has God lifted your mist? Or are you walking around in a big fog cloud that you can't seem to shake?

And when I talk about a cloud, I guess I'm thinking about a variety of things that could cloud our vision necessary to follow God. It could be things like health issues or financial struggles or depression or unforgiveness or a guilty conscience, or relationship strife or a feeling of fear and anxiety or over - busyness or an uncertain future or an obsession to gain something that remains out of reach or disappointment due to unfulfilled expectations, and so many other things that are too numerous to mention.

I think those seven disciples who decided to follow Peter's lead and chose to go fishing with him were in a cloud. And the best way to describe their cloud might be to call it a cloud of confusion or maybe exhaustion. I'm not sure what else to call it.

I think they're confused, first off, because they had to endure the extremely traumatic experience of watching their friend and leader of three years be unjustly arrested, tortured and murdered. This certainly impacts a person. How do you bounce back from something like that? - And there was nothing they could do about it.

And even if there was something they could have done, would they have had the courage to do it? Maybe this might be called the cloud of resignation. Maybe the disciples realized that they weren't as strong and courageous and loyal as they thought they were.

Then they had to face up to the fact that they abandoned him and denied they had even known him. I'm sure this reality became seared into their consciences and they probably wondered ... How could my friend ever forgive me?

So undoubtedly, the clouds surrounding them were thick, full elements of self-doubt, guilt, weakness, fear, and confusion, just to name a few. All these things that could impair our vision and make living nearly intolerable.

But maybe there were some good things swirling around in the cloud too, like Jesus appearing before them out of nowhere, and though they saw his wounds that reminded them of his grisly death, Jesus didn't seem harmed or injured.

Instead, he looked powerful and confident and alive - so much like himself.

It was almost too good to be true, and he spoke to them and blessed them and taught them. Jesus was the same as he was before the crucifixion, and yet somehow different in a very good and supernatural way. And these truths undoubtedly led to many more questions. So yes, I think confusion is a good description for the disciples' mist or cloud.

Maybe you've been here - In a cloud or mist with all these feelings and experiences swirling around you and you not being able to understand them, let alone control them.

Just this past week I happened to see the movie Inside Out 2. Don't ask how that happened - and for the record, I never watched the first Inside Out movie. I just mention it because I thought the creators of the movie did an amazing job of portraying the complexity and chaos that goes on inside our brains at any given moment. No wonder we can often feel out of control with our emotions.

And the question is ... What can we do about it?

Well, we know what Peter did. He went fishing.

In the midst of the confusion and his attempt to process the recent events of his life, he did what he knew best. He went fishing - He sought something that was familiar to him. He probably thought to himself ...

Let's take the family boat out for a spin and do the thing I can practically do in my sleep. He returned to the thing that could give him at least some sense of stability and maybe even a little bit of comfort - which is ironic when you think about it in light of the saying that we've all used ... don't rock the boat.

And in those moments of seeking sanity, and at the same time experiencing failure because yes, he didn't catch any fish, the voice of Jesus called to him through the mist - the mist that was about to lift.

And to Apostle John, Christ's voice must have seemed like an angel's voice. Sure, it may have taken John a moment to have it register in his mind, but believe me, John knew it was Jesus way before the first fish swam into the net. After all, who but Jesus would have had the nerve to tell these expert fishermen where to cast their nets?

Of course, we all know that this fishing scene is the sequel to the one that Luke described in chapter 5. You remember the one that took place three years earlier. For all we know, Peter could have been in the exact same boat!

You remember the account that happened early in Jesus' ministry when he was just calling his first disciples, and he was standing on the shore of the same lake and all the people were crowding around him listening to him teach, so Jesus climbed into Peter's boat and asked him to row out a little from shore?

Remember that story?

When Jesus, after he had completed his teaching asked Peter to go out into deeper water and let down his nets? And Peter being Peter argued with Jesus for a half a second because he had been fishing all night and hadn't caught one lousy thing?

But he did it anyway because Jesus asked him to.

Yes, and they hauled in so many fish in that the nets began to break and the boats almost sunk because of the weight?

And now, three years later the fog and mist were lifting from Peter's heart and mind.

Where before Peter fell at Jesus' knees and begged him to depart from him because he knew his sins were laid out bare before a holy God, now Peter can't run, swim, or splash fast enough to get to His Savior's side.

And yes, this is at least the third time Peter has seen and interacted with the risen Lord. Bu this time is different - it is the most important time for Peter because Peter learns, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he is truly and fully forgiven and loved by his Lord.

Can you see the mist receding? *"Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these? Feed my lambs."*

Can you feel the warmth of God's love shining on Peter's soul and dispersing the clouds of doubt? *"Simon Son of John, do you truly love me? Take care of my sheep."*

Do you see the mist lifting so that Peter gains a clear vision of his Savior and the purpose before him? *"Simon, Son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep."*

The mist lifted for Peter, and He saw his Savior and his mission clearly before him.

How about you?