

Sermon 10 April 2014 'A New Vision'  
Acts 9:1-6; John 21:1-19

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen

A New Vision – is what comes with the Risen Lord – *no matter* if the Lord is tucked into a 'barn' at the **back** of the property or on full public display in your front garden. **Where ever** you place the Lord; because he is 'around', you have new vision operating and a promise of that vision being renewed – as often as needed... The presence of the Risen Jesus affects our eye sight! cV

Now for a couple of our people in the Texts that Derek read for us, this is a *minor adjustment*, but for most *it is major*; and for Paul / Saul – it was HUGE. There are two ways this new vision is at work in our Bible readings today. In the physical sense Paul was made blind, couldn't see – **at all** for 3 days. Then there is the blindness in a faith sense, and Paul fits this as well – but so do all the disciples – especially those mentioned. They are in the dark / 'blind' – they need to see what Jesus – and the risen Lord is doing and asking of them.

In both, vision / sight / being able to see /the "light" **comes with Jesus** presence. And so this morning we have a constant tension between the *physical and faith* meanings in the words of the stories before us. So whether it is Luke writing in his book of the Acts of the Apostles – or John in his Gospel, both give witness to the top layer of actual lack of physical sight **and** a second 'meaning' layer about 'vision'.

Not many of us have ever had an awe-filled experience of meeting the Risen Lord and been made blind in the experience like Saul! And most of us are blessed because we do not have to experience someone breathing out *murderous threats* on our life for following Jesus 'Way'; and even better we are not living that kind of hate-filled, anxious, negatively authoritarian life! But Paul/ Saul was. And **then** he got **stopped** – **still**. 3 days of blindness, utter trust, complete reliance for everything on those he had breathed murderous threats about! Ouch! It's very dramatic –*just like Paul himself really*. Cv

There might be more of us who have been out on a 'little' boat at night, maybe not on a pre-city night-sky-dark like the disciples were, but we can begin to understand the blindness that comes from the 'dark-of-night. At least it wasn't a storm the disciples were having on lake Galilee, well a *physical* one anyway.

They were in for a storm of emotions and faith challenge and... **but here** they were – out at sea, *going back to* what they knew... picking up their old life – slipping into old habits... They'd **had all that rush of** Easter in Jerusalem **and** the excitement of Jesus popping into the upper room with them **TWICE!** They'd heard Jesus promise of peace, the breath of the Spirit, the blessings of forgiveness for the immediate past few days with the guilt, fear, terror, anxiety. They'd **heard** his commissioning of them **but**. Cv

**But then**... well... **nothing**. I imagine they had that 'flat' – grey almost fatigue-ing feeling that creeps up on us after an extreme experience like grief or loss – *of any kind*. When you walk in circles – mentally if not physically because your mind, soul and body are not 'together'... **So a group** of the disciples (7 of them John says) 7 are together in Galilee and decide to go out fishing. cV

We return to comfort – **for comfort** – we return to old habits so easily after catching glimpses, having a new vision. And that's exactly what these disciples are doing. Its night – dark; a spot of night fishing; they're feeling so dark, what's a bit more? At least they might feel better being able to provide some food for the families... Self-reliance? Pride? Desperate clinging to self-worth? **We don't know** – what we do know is that John tells us they caught NOTHING. All night!

Then when the dark of the night begins to shift with the approach of the sun and the cold slips to its lowest; these 7 men 'see' a figure on the beach who calls out to them. **What? What** does the figure call?

They have to throw the 'net' on the right side. Whose side? Theirs or the Risen Lord's? Double meanings absolutely in this piece, and remember – *and I am sorry to all left-handed people* but the Right Side was the side of power – authority – meant 'God'. 'Throw your net onto God's side' – Jesus called to them.

The net is immediately so full, they worry about it holding all the fish.... **So full** they could not pull it into the little boat; the Greek does call it a 'little' boat; perhaps already over full with the 7 on board... but we are to take note: when we fish on the Lord's side – our nets are so full we can't do anything with them – on our own. Perhaps we are so sacred of this Biblical meaning we don't go fishing (?) or we pretend and fish on our side/self? Something to discuss with the Lord because **we are the best** at hiding truths even from our own selves! cV

But that's not really where we're called to today. **Today** this figure on the beach is suddenly recognised. **Not** by Peter, he takes the witness of another / the other – the 'disciple whom the Lord Loves' recognised the figure and said: 'It's the Lord'. **Peter** quick as ever, throws some clothes on and jumps out of the boat and walks to the beach. There the Lord has a BBQ set, charcoals nicely burning and breakfast ready. Bring me some of your catch ... *he says...*

*And did you notice*, this net so full of fish they couldn't pull it into the boat. Peter, **Peter drags** it ashore by himself, when the Lord is present. There the Lord has a BBQ set, charcoals nicely burning, breakfast ready. 'Bring me some of your catch', they did, adding to Jesus own fish and bread BBQ. CV

When we fish on our own – it has no lasting worth, when we fish following the Lord's instruction we are successful – **but can't process** – action our work **until** we acknowledge the Lord's presence with us. And then – with the Lord we can complete the task, commission, job – **and bring** an offering of our work to him, for him – to share. Double meanings simmer under the surface of these texts! In our actual story Peter drags the net ashore, and after breakfast, Peter and Jesus have 'one of those' discussions.

The Bible heading is titled "Jesus reinstates Peter". In this discussion we hear how the Risen Lord commissions Peter for the job of establishing the church. One of the things about each time the disciples experienced the risen Lord they were commissioned – given a job to do. Not even Paul escapes this, although all we have today is a promise that once in Damascus, Paul will be told what to do. For now – Peter and Jesus have a bit of a word battle going.

Our English misses the battle completely and so I hope that maybe you will see this verbal exchange a little differently as you remember the Greek words – not English. Greek has 5 words for the one English word '**love**'. Jesus: Peter, do you love me unconditionally? Peter: 'Jesus you know I love you as a brother'. Jesus: Peter, do you love me unconditionally? Peter: 'Jesus you know I love you as a brother. – then Jesus asks – *has he given up???* Jesus: Peter, do you love me as a brother? Peter – Yes you know – with everything you have – that I do.' **And Peter's hurt by Jesus not 'getting' it.** Peter – may well have thought he had finally got Jesus to understand. It was all about brotherly love – *wasn't it?* Cv

Jesus actually calls them children *again we might miss the implication* – children not as in child-like, young in years, cute! But 'children' as in not mature, not grown up – needing to grow up – needing to mature... The disciples **have** figured a lot more about Jesus since his death – but still not *even Peter* gets it. Jesus vision is bigger – is more than- is more. More unconditional, more loving, more forgiving, more peace-filled, more... it is Agape – shalom – just as there is always a 'more' we can bring to Jesus table that he has prepared and where he is waiting for us.

When we join him- around his table, whether we prefer a BBQ fish breakfast, evening bread meal in Emmaus; *grape-juice, or wafer* ... when we finally see that it is the Lord **who has called us** to him, we see that our lives are 'more'. **It is** more than the physical 'seeing' how the Lord's presence in our lives is good, we are also blessed with a new vision of what we can do and bring to his table to share. Amen