

John 21:1-14, Acts 9:1-19a, Revelation 5:11-14 A Commentary 4.18.10

153. 186,000. 100,000,000.

He did it again after Easter Sunday so that they would know that he was the same one who had done it long before Good Friday. He filled their fishing nets to overflowing – one hundred fifty-three large fish, all keepers. What kind of statement does this make to men who still didn't know quite what to think about seeing Jesus alive after knowing that he had been cold, stone dead! If his power and authority were behind their work when he first called them to follow him (the intended effect of the first time he performed this miracle), what about his power and authority being behind them now that he would never die again (the intended effect of this second time he performed the miracle)! 153!

The man walking the road to Damascus was public enemy #1 as far as Christians were concerned. He was on his way to round up more Christians and to do away with them in whatever way he could, till a brilliant light outshone the sun. Light normally travels at 186,000 mps. Whether or not this light traveled faster or burned brighter than that I couldn't tell you. But ask Saul about its effect. Apparently this Jesus in whom the Christians believed wasn't dead at all. Bathed in brilliant light, Jesus Christ appeared to Saul and spoke to Saul and ultimately converted Saul. The man who despised Christ and despised Christians was baptized into Christ and it became his life's work to glorify Christ and to increase the number of Christians. 186,000mps!

Other than the national debt, which is truly an unfathomable number, how can you realistically get your arms around 100M of anything? From Bible accounts, just one angel typically paralyzed human beings with fear. 100M angels surround the throne of Jesus and their holy brilliance pales in comparison to the glory of the Lamb who was slain, who now lives in glory and ever shall reign. Jesus Christ deserves and receives the praise of every angel and of all creation. In heaven right now, that's what he gets. And he is in this room today and with you wherever you go, he whom angels praise and serve, 100M strong!

And yet there can be days upon days when, like the disciples, it's as if we've fished all day and caught nothing, and frustration is the catch of the day. There are days upon days when, like Saul, we look back on our lives and are of the impression that everything about us has been sinful and wrong and completely misdirected, and dejection is the cloud over our heads. There are days upon days when the victory celebration in heaven seems like something a million light years away, something we'll never take part in because, well, you know, let me tell you what I've been dealing with lately.

It is 11/14 days after Easter Sunday. Where is the joy? Where are the alleluias? Not stored away till next Easter, are they? Jesus didn't plop himself back down in the grave, did he?

11/14 days after Easter, a sweltering Tuesday in August or a cold, windy January night – the day doesn't matter. We are continuously subject to the horrible consequences of unbelief, living as if we have a Savior who did not die in our place and rise again. What are we saying to the living Jesus with our wondering about how we'll ever get by, with our worrying about things over which we have no control, with our wallowing in the pigsty mud of immorality, whatever form it takes? This unbelief of ours that shows itself at every turn doesn't merely mess up our lives and ruin our relationships and make us miserable. It cuts us off from God. It violates his holiness and leaves us helplessly, hopelessly hell-bound.

Contrition is a word which means I realize the position I'm in, I hate myself for who I've been, and most of all, I am terrified by how God should treat me. *A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* We come before God with broken and contrite hearts and he comes to us in lessons like these. These three lessons which you listen to Sunday after Sunday set Christ before you, Christ who did not give up on weak-faithed disciples, who converted the killer of Christians, who commands the worship of 100M angels and all creation. He is the one whom God despised and damned in your place. He lives again to tell you how holy and pure you are. He should know. He made it happen.

153 fish, because he would have you know that for the life which he has called you to live, there isn't anything that your living Savior can't do for you. Light traveling at 186,000mps, because he would have you know that however sin-checked your past has been, baptized into his name most holy he has washed you clean and given you a new life to live, the life of a child of God, joined to Jesus. 100M angels who worship him night and day, because as holy as they are, not even they know what it's like to be redeemed from sin like you do, and for that you will worship him forever with the kind of thrilling joy that goes beyond anything you've ever known or imagined.

Jesus Christ on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, on the road to Damascus, on his throne encircled by angels – these are the scripture lessons for today, the lessons which tell you that Jesus tailors the use of his power to your specific needs, that he has turned your life completely around through baptism and the forgiveness of sins, that he will see you soon enough when you take the place he won for you near his throne, with all the saints and angels.

The King is alive and in charge, strong and mighty, gracious and glorious, and you are the apple of his eye. Because you are, by his grace and power, be done with sin, love the Lord, serve your neighbor. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Let's live like we believe it, because we do!