

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

**Title: 153**

**Lesson: John 21:1-19**

***21** After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. **2** Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. **3** Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

***4** Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. **5** Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." **6** He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. **7** That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. **8** But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.*

***9** When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. **10** Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." **11** So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. **12** Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. **14** This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

***15** When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." **16** A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." **17** He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. **18** Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to*

go.” <sup>19</sup> (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

**(Slide 1)** One of my favorite pen brands is BIC. You’re probably familiar with it. I have one with me even now. What makes this pen special is its convenience. It writes smoothly every time, it’s lightweight, it doesn’t break even after accidentally dropping it multiple times, and best of all, it’s cheap. I use it to sign documents or underline passages while reading.

These days, stationery is so diverse and common that we don’t often appreciate a simple ballpoint pen. But back in the 1950s, things were very different. Before ballpoint pens, the most common writing tools were pencils and fountain pens. Pencils were light and convenient, but their major weakness was that they could be erased. You couldn’t use a pencil for official contracts or signatures. So, fountain pens, which used ink, were preferred for anything meant to last. But fountain pens had their own issues. They were hard to maintain—leave them unused for a few days, and the ink would dry up, clogging the pen. Ink leaks and smudges were common. And above all, fountain pens were expensive, not something everyone could afford.

This is where the ballpoint pen came in, revolutionizing our lives. As I mentioned, ballpoint pens were convenient, easy to maintain, preserved ink for a long time, and most importantly, they were affordable. In Korea, we have a brand similar to BIC called Monami. Like BIC pens, Monami pens are incredibly simple. The body is white, and the cap indicates the ink color. Monami pens are so common in Korea, costing about 20 cents each, that most Koreans probably have at least five of them at home. What’s interesting is that the official name of this pen is the Monami 153.

153. Doesn’t that number sound familiar? As we saw in John 21 today, 153 is the number of fish Peter and the disciples caught in the Sea of Galilee when they cast their nets at the risen Jesus’ command. The Bible often uses numbers like 3, 7, or 40 symbolically. While we don’t know exactly what 153 represents, we can understand it as a number symbolizing the abundant harvest that comes from obeying Jesus’ words—a catch so plentiful that seven disciples couldn’t haul it in.

To briefly return to the pen story, The chairman of the company that developed the Monami 153 was a faithful Christian. When he was deciding on a name for his pen, the story of John 21 deeply moved him. So, in the spirit of sharing the gospel, he added “153” to the name, signifying that those who believe in Jesus will bear great fruit. Just as BIC became a massive hit in the U.S., the Monami 153 became a sensation in Korea, selling about 4 billion pens over the past 60 years.

**(Slide 2)** Today, we're looking at John 21, which tells the story of Jesus appearing to His disciples for the third time after His resurrection. But something about this story feels like *déjà vu*. When Jesus first called Peter, he was at the Sea of Galilee, using all his knowledge and experience to fish all night, only to catch nothing. Every time the Bible describes Peter fishing, he's toiling all night and coming up empty-handed. At this point, we might wonder if Peter was even a competent fisherman! And it wasn't just him—six other disciples were with him, and they, too, caught nothing.

Exhausted and discouraged after a fruitless night, they hear a voice calling from the shore: "Friends, haven't you any fish?" Then the voice continues, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

How did the disciples feel hearing this? Perhaps they cast the net again, thinking, "What's one more try?" Or maybe they felt strangely compelled to obey. They could have chosen to give up and not cast the net, but whether they doubted or not, the important thing is that they followed the voice and threw the net into the sea once more.

When they had cast their nets all night with their own efforts, they caught nothing. But when they followed the voice, it was as if every fish in the sea was waiting for them. The net was so full that seven grown men couldn't lift it.

I mentioned this feels like *déjà vu*. Peter must have remembered the moment he first met Jesus. He realized only Jesus could make this happen and recognized that the voice was Jesus'.

The net, so full of fish, was too heavy to haul onto the boat, so they dragged it to where Jesus was. Remarkably, despite being filled with large fish, the net didn't tear.

**(Slide 3)** When Peter and the disciples reached Jesus, He was preparing breakfast over a charcoal fire. How did Peter feel standing by that fire?

**(Slide 4)** Do you remember this sound? When Jesus was suffering before the crowd, Peter was terrified. If people knew he was Jesus' disciple, he might be crucified too. So, by a charcoal fire, warming himself, he denied knowing Jesus, saying he wasn't His disciple. How many times? Three times.

Seeing Jesus by the charcoal fire, preparing breakfast, Peter must have felt ashamed and convicted. As they ate, Jesus suddenly asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Embarrassed and convicted, Peter might have avoided Jesus' eyes, forcing a smile, and said, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Though Peter answered, Jesus asked the same question again: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was likely afraid but managed to reply, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” But Jesus asked a third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” At that moment, Peter realized Jesus knew everything, including his betrayal. His shame turned to repentance for his wrongs, and he may have knelt before Jesus, tears streaming, saying, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Friends, Jesus is the God of love. He doesn’t condemn, judge, or punish us. He came to forgive all our sins. By asking Peter the same question three times, Jesus forgave him and instructed him, “Feed my lambs and take care of my sheep,” showing him how to live going forward.

Loving and believing in Jesus means following His life and words. Even if following Him brings discomfort or disadvantage in this world, or if our hopes and desires go unfulfilled, it means trusting in Jesus, who promises eternal life, and walking His path.

**(Slide 5)** As I meditated on John 21, one verse struck me—verse 11: “It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.”

The fish in the net weren’t just any fish; they were *large fish*. The standard for “large” may vary, but in the Bible, these were undeniably big fish, so heavy that seven grown men couldn’t lift them. Did those large, strong fish stay still in the net? Probably not. They likely moved in every direction. Yet, amazingly, the net didn’t tear.

In our church, we have diverse personalities, thoughts, opinions, and ways of life. Sometimes our differences clash, and sometimes we don’t like each other. But what matters is that the net of God’s love and grace never breaks and holds us all together. Each of us is the church, the body of Christ.

Loving, believing, and following Jesus means looking to others’ hearts before insisting on our own rightness, patiently embracing differences, lifting up the brokenhearted, and supporting the weary. This is the way of love Jesus showed us, and it’s why we partake in communion.

The Lord still calls each of us by name, asking, “Do you love me?” If we can sincerely answer, “Lord, you know that I love you,” our mission is clear: to feed and care for the sheep God has entrusted to us.

May we follow Jesus, loving and caring for this community, this church, as a net that never breaks, embracing one another. Amen.