

**30<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

We have come to the last weekend of 2018. Have you taken time to reflect upon 2018? Well, 2018 has been an exciting year for ICS. I remember we started 2018 sermon series entitled a firm footing and little did we know about the trade war. It was the Lord's way of preparing us so that we will not be shaken by it. We had a fantastic church camp despite of a curve ball. We had 145 people prayed to receive Christ in all the different services!! I am sure the angelic host are rejoicing with us and God is glorified. We had a wonderful empower conference. We celebrated our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!! I believe 2019 will be an exciting year filled with God's faithfulness and goodness.

I am going to share with you what the Lord placed in my heart for the last sermon of 2018.

**John 21:1-14 (NKJV)** After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*: <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and **that night they caught nothing.** <sup>4</sup> But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." <sup>6</sup> **And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."** So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. <sup>7</sup> Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. <sup>8</sup> **But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish.** <sup>9</sup> Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and **fish laid on it, and bread.** <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." <sup>11</sup> **Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.** <sup>12</sup> **Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast."** Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"—knowing that it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. <sup>14</sup> **This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.**

It wasn't easy for the disciples when they witnessed the crucifixion and the death of Jesus Christ. They have developed a close relationship with Him during the three years of His ministry on earth. It wasn't the kind of climax that they would have expected since they have witnessed all the good works, the good news and the excitement of the people whom they have help. **Peter was probably feeling very**

miserable after denying His master three times in a row just when he has vowed that he will never do so. It must have been an emotional roller coaster for them especially Jesus has appeared to them prior to this passage.

There are many speculations as to why the disciples were back in the sea of Tiberias. Some felt that it was therapeutic for the soul after the loss of a loved one, it could be to make some money but then they actually had servants to help in their trade before they left with Jesus. They were left on their own to walk out their faith now. I believe it was also a time for them to process how it was going to work out for them. There were ministry funds during Jesus' ministry where Judas was the purse keeper. They have been asked to go forth and preach the gospel. Of course, you won't have to think about ministry fund when you are under the leadership of Jesus because Jesus had Judas to administer the purse. Well, things have changed. They have to work it out to trust God.

Sometimes, it is very difficult to make a sound decision while you are in a state of emotional instability and I guess that what the disciples were experiencing. **We have been entrusted the ministry and word of reconciliation just like the disciples were asked to go forth and preach the gospel.**

**How do we balance serving God and trusting Him to provide for us especially in uncertain times?**

Honestly, the current economy in China and around the world certainly brings about quite an uncertainty for 2019. We might be taking some time to ponder upon the Lord's leading as we come to the end of 2018. Let us look at what we can learn from this passage.

**We worship and serve a resurrected Lord!**

Jesus was praying for them because He knew that the disciples will face the same kind of persecuted especially after His death and resurrection. Jesus has given them the Word, sealed them with the Holy Spirit and they will soon be baptized by the Holy Spirit. Everything has been set for the apostles to go forth to plant churches and preach the good news!! **We need to remember that Jesus had the fullness of the Holy Spirit and full of faith in God the Father especially for the supernatural.** The disciples were beginning to walk out their faith without Jesus walking beside them. Remember, the scriptures say that the just shall live by faith and will grow from faith to faith. Therefore, Jesus had to assure them and work with them before His ascension. While it is easy to acknowledge Jesus as our Savior but it can be a bit challenging to trust Him to provide for finances and others. It needs us to build up our faith to trust in Him. **Honestly, we really do not know how much faith we have in God until we are tested.**

**V1,14.** After these things **Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples** at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*: .....<sup>14</sup> **This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.**

This is Jesus third appearance to the disciples after His resurrection. Jesus even addressed doubting Thomas who demanded to see His nail pierced hands and side by a second appearance. Thomas needed to see Jesus' nailed pierced hand and side in order to believe that He has resurrected. We are too used to walk by sight and not by faith. **The New Testament lifestyle is a lifestyle of faith in the resurrected Lord.** Faith is taking God's word for it without seeing. The word of God is the evidence for our faith because we believe in a resurrected Lord who listen to our prayers and know our needs. The resurrection of Christ is really beyond the comprehension of the mind because it is supernatural.

There are some speculations regarding why the disciples ended at the Sea of Tiberias when Jesus sent them off to preach the gospel during the first appearance in Jerusalem.

**Could the disciples be running away from their calling as an apostle to preach the gospel?**

**John 20:21(NKJV)** So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! **As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"

I don't think that they were really running away from their calling especially after the resurrected Lord has appeared to them twice! Jesus has been modeling for them what is ministry and also revealed to them how God the Father has been faithful in answering prayers. They had a short stint of walking by faith when Jesus sent them out by pair to minister to the people.

**Luke 22:35 (NKJV)** And He said to them, "When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, **did you lack anything?**" **So they said, "Nothing."**

I believe it is a challenge to their faith to know how it is going to work without having much money for the trip or to even preach the gospel full time without a secular job!! They probably would have it in their mind that they are to preach the gospel. Yes, they should expect people to receive them into their homes but it might be challenging because of the widespread persecution!!! With the persecution raging in town and the region they might not be able to stay long in one location for tent making business too! Therefore, they probably have not figured it out in their heart regarding how it is going to work!! **Where is the income going to come for them and the work of the ministry?!! It is real! It is a new lifestyle to them. A lifestyle of faith and total dependency on God to provide! This is really where the rubber meets the road and they have to walk out the calling on their lives after the Lord commissioning them for service.** While Thomas had the courage to articulate his conviction seeing is believing but I believe most of them had the same thing in mind too. Don't get me wrong about the Apostle Thomas that he is just a doubter because his work of apostleship was found in India. **You realized that Peter used to be someone who is fast to act and speak but he is taking more time to process and even count the cost now.**

**Example:** We might even be pondering about how life will look like in the face of all the uncertainty. They are many professionals who don't have a permanent job but has been offered a role on a project basis only. They will be paid based on the

number of months it takes to finish the project. **It is a lifestyle of faith to believe that there will be enough projects in a year to provide for the family.** There is no stability neither is there a constant stream of income. All of a sudden, we are thrown into a state of having to trust God and live out the new lifestyle. Adjustment have to be made and our faith has to be anchored in the resurrected Lord.

Everyone will have some concerns when we need to live by faith and not by sight. **Therefore, it is important for us to have a deep conviction that we worship and serve a resurrected Lord who is faithful to His promises especially in the area of provision!!!**

**Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)** And my **God shall supply all your need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul was very convinced of God's provision in life although he has also learnt to be abased and abound. There will be individuals and churches who will a channel used by God to supply the need of the apostles because we serve a resurrected Lord who knows our need.

Jesus had no lack during His ministry when He was sent by the Heavenly Father. Likewise, there will be no lack when Jesus sent the disciples and us for the ministry.

Our faith is built on the resurrected Lord therefore the God whom we worship is alive! He is real. He is not a made belief nor some character in a fable story. He takes active interest in our lives.

### **God is Omniscience**

We might find it difficult to understand with our finite mind that we serve an omniscience, omnipotent and omnipresent God. **We need to believe that God knows our profession well too.**

**V3.5** Simon Peter said to them, **"I am going fishing."** They said to him, **"We are going with you also."** They went out and immediately got into the boat, and **that night they caught nothing.** .... **6. And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."** **So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish...**.....

Jesus appeared to the disciples twice in Jerusalem. The disciples were at the sea of Tiberias fishing. We need to remember that some of the disciples were fishermen before the Lord called them to follow Him. **It will be very natural to return to your old profession to make some money even if they plan to preach the gospel. I mean the other disciples followed Peter's decision because they thought they needed some money too!! It is a physiological need.**

To be fair to the disciples, before Jesus was arrested He did instruct them to take some money and a knapsack. There will be some real challenges and persecution after His arrest, His death and also after His ascension.

**Luke 22:36 (NKJV)** Then He said to them, “But now, **he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack;** and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

It will be very difficult for them to work if they have to move around quickly when persecution were to break out in a city. God is omniscience and He knows what they are thinking. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear and will always provide a way out for us.

**Mark 10:28-29 (NKJV)** Then Peter began to say to Him, “**See, we have left all and followed You.**”<sup>29</sup> So Jesus answered and said, “**Assuredly,** I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, <sup>30</sup> **who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions**—and in the age to come, eternal life.

**The disciples had nothing with them based on Peter’s comment in this passage.** They have nothing materially and we need to bear in mind that it has been three years since they left everything to follow Jesus. They have laid down their profession, their source of income and chose to follow Jesus when He called them. **Jesus assured the disciples that they will be provided for in the ministry through the body of believers. There will be provision of land and resources for the ministry. God will use people especially the church to provide for the work of the ministry. We need to know that we are stewards of God’s money and they will be times when He will call for His funds. Just like Jesus asked for the donkey when He needed it.**

Example: There are many Christians around the world that have offered up land of their own to build churches and ministry offices. They know that they are stewards of God’s resources therefore they will offer it when they hear of a need.

The disciples spent the **WHOLE NIGHT** fishing and they caught nothing! Can you imagine how frustrating and humiliating it is to have caught nothing after the entire night especially when you are supposed to be a professional fisherman. They weren’t fishing with line and a hook. **They were casting with a net for fishes in the sea of Tiberias. It quite a sizeable sea. They have caught nothing! So there will be no income to divide.....**They have come to the end of themselves and need God to act.

**Example:** It can be very frustrating to be living in uncertainty during this **trade war** especially when you have no idea when it will end. All you know is that the **markers are down and the economy is slowing.** Maybe some of you are **without a job now or could be losing the job** in the near future. **The job market is very competitive and many companies favor returning Chinese and also overseas Chinese for the job.** In fact, the local government are preparing good remuneration packages for that expertise that they are recruiting for returning Chinese. **The MNC(s) are localizing the packages and hiring more local senior executives.** You are not ready to **join a local company or the market is just quiet.** In fact, there are fewer and fewer of such positions available in the market and you wonder how the future will be like. You have done a lot and there is nothing. Artificial Intelligence and technology are moving too quickly and we hardly have time to catch up. We might not even have time to

upgrade our skills and knowledge. We are considered to be irrelevant. **We feel as though there is nothing for us!**

**Example:** The young working professionals are also facing a lot of competition from returning graduates from the US, UK, Australia and other parts of the world. It is especially competitive because of some these young working professionals have experience in MNC before they decided to return to China. They have the language and understand the local culture better than us. **We feel as though there is nothing for us!**

**Example:** There are certain industry that have developed so quickly that our skill set is no longer relevant. It will be flogging a dead horse if we insist that we are relevant, there will still be such jobs available and we want to stay in Shanghai. Maybe the Lord is leading and prompting you to do something else. He might even be giving you opportunity to change industry and even upskill but we need to yield and be open to His leading. We need to be humble and obedient for change. Statistic tells us that 67% of the people in the world resist changes. If we do not change then we will be left behind, think of the past and failed to look into the vast opportunity ahead of us.

**Yc.** And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.....

I don't think anyone of us would like anyone who is not an expert in our profession to teach us what to do and it is especially true for fishermen.

**Can you imagine when a group of professional fishermen have caught nothing for the whole night and were told to cast the net near the shore by someone who is standing on land?! Could they have done it because they have heard a similar instruction in the past?**

**Luke 5:4-6 (NKJV)** When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, **"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."** <sup>5</sup> But Simon answered and said to Him, **"Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."** <sup>6</sup> And when they had done this, **they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.**

It is especially true for Simon Peter who had a similar experience when they caught a huge number of fishes at the instruction of the Master. Jesus revealed to the disciples on both occasion that He is omniscience who even knew where the fishes are and even at unlike places near the shore! **God provided for them on both occasions but they had to listen to Jesus' instruction and not based on their own wisdom even professional wisdom!! At least, they were humble enough to listen to the instruction of Jesus.....many people won't especially in the area of their job and their future.**

**The KEY is to pause and listen to what God is leading you to do in the next phase of your life. Take time to quiet down and listen. Do your devotion, pray, journal and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit.**

## Are you open to the Lord's leading in your professional life?

**Rom 8:14 (NKJV)** For as many as **are led by the Spirit of God**, these are sons of God.

**John 10:27 (NKJV)** **My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Will you be humble enough to be led by the Spirit of God to make a change in your career or company even though you might not be comfortable in doing?

Get a confirmation from God's word in your devotion.

Do you feel the peace (or no peace) in your heart to make the change?

Have you sought godly counsel?

**Example:** Till Kundt gave a testimony of how the Lord turned the situation around when the factory that he was leading was told to close. He prayed about it and waited on the Lord regarding what he should do. He felt led by the word of God given to him during his devotion to stay in Shanghai and to continue the work of the factory despite of the owner's decision to close it. The Lord miraculously provided a buyer for the factory, engaged him to be the GM and employed some of the former staff for the factory. It has to be the Lord's work.

Are you will to trust Him and acknowledge that He is omniscience and He is able to provide for you?

Are you able to put His calling and priorities first so that He can provide all things for you?

**"Who are you?" He is The Great I Am**

I believe the reason was to provide food on the table and money for the ministry when the disciples went out to the sea to fish. **Jesus had His own way of assuring them, reminding them and revealing to them who He is and what He is able to do.**

**V12,13** Jesus said to them, **"Come and eat breakfast."** Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, **"Who are You?"—knowing that it was the Lord.** <sup>13</sup> Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

The disciples were not able to figure out who it was standing at the shore but this person had fish and bread ready for them to have breakfast. I don't think it is a coincidence to have bread and fishes for breakfast. If the disciples were to make a recollection of how Jesus provided for the 5000 people with five loaves and two fish.

**Luke 9:16-17 (NKJV)** Then He took the **five loaves and the two fish**, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave *them* to the disciples to set before the multitude. <sup>17</sup> **So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them**

**Will God be able to provide for me and the family?** This will be one of the first challenge in the mind of the missionary as they process their calling after being in the corporate world for a period of time. The single or couple will have to sit down to process this thought and make the decision based on their conviction.

**Example:** Everyone who intends to be an entrepreneur will also be pondering on this question before they venture out of the corporate world to start their own business. All the security of a stable job and a pay package that will come at the end of the month will be gone. All of a sudden, we are thrown into an environment where there will be more expenditure than income for a period of one to two years before the new venture is able to break even. Our faith will be tested and we better have the conviction that it is a God's idea to venture out or else there will be nothing available to anchor our faith in Him in an ever-changing environment.

**They dared not ask who He is because they knew it was Jesus! It's a revelation that He is God and the resurrected Lord!**

**IMPORTANT: Who is God to you?** While the disciples were dared asked who are you though they knew that it is the Lord because they have already seen Him twice prior to this third experience. **A deeper question will be to ask who Jesus really is in our lives beside being our Savior? I mean they knew He is the Savior but would they also believe that He is going to be their provider for ministry and life? It is also a question for us to answer in our own lives.**

**Is He the The great I AM in your life?**

**Exodus 3:14 (NKJV)** And God said to Moses, **"I AM WHO I AM."** And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

Just like the Israelites had to understand that God is not just the great deliverer who led them out of Egypt but He is also everything that they need Him to be in their lives. There is no other way of describing the all sufficiency God except He is the great I AM.

**This name of God, I AM, is a form of the verb "to be" in the Hebrew language. He expresses His self-existence and the unchangeableness of His character. He transcends the past, the present and the future. He has always been, He is and He will always be.** The great I AM is the inexhaustible God. He has divine sufficiency. **There is endless abundance to meet any circumstances, challenge, demand, and surprises that comes out of unforeseen circumstances.** This is the assurance that God was giving to Moses that it is the great I AM that is sending him to deliver the Israelites that the slavery of Egypt. What an all-encompassing name found in the great I AM!

**It is very normal to have a struggle between doubt and faith which I believe it was exactly what the disciples were struggling with and had to be addressed. We tend to rationalize away the power and ability of God because our mind is not able to comprehend it. We have finite mind therefore we can only overcome this limitation by the renewal of the mind and to take it by faith from the heart. If we**

have been asked to do something great for the Lord that's beyond us just like Moses and Abraham then **we really need to meditate that God is Able in order for us to keep the peace of God in our heart and mind when the situation is contrary to what we are believing especially when "curve balls" are thrown at us periodically.**

**Gen 18:14 (Amp)** **Is anything too difficult** or too wonderful for the Lord? At the appointed time, when the season [for her delivery] comes, I will return to you and Sarah will have a son."

If you are to reverse this question then what God is telling Abraham is.....I AM ABLE and ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE therefore don't be anxious nor look at the Sarah's body but believe that you will have a son through Sarah when I return to you the next time. All Abraham needed to do was to believe that God is Able! **There is nothing too difficult for God because He is able! Sarah conceived Isaac! God assured Abraham and Sarah that He is able! God is able to bring to past whatever He has promised despite of the physical limitation. If God has called us to do a particular work be it in ministry, corporate or even in building up a business then He is able to see us through!**

**Jeremiah 32:27 (NKJV)** "Behold, I *am* the Lord, the God of all flesh. **Is there anything too hard for Me?**

Likewise, God asked Jeremiah when he was shut up in prison to buy a field from his cousin during a time where King Nebuchadnezzar with his great armies, and their fearsome reputation for cruelty, right outside the walls. The city was about to fall. It was definitely a wrong time to buy the field or property. Jeremiah went on to pay for the field, sign the title deed in the presence of witnesses and sealed the deal. Nobody knew how long Israel will be under the control of King Nebuchadnezzar. Of course, the most important thing is not the purchase of the field but the restoration of Israel. Jeremiah had to have faith that God is able to restore the Kingdom to the nation of Israel. Jeremiah had to strengthen his faith in God and God assured him that there is nothing too difficult for Him. Jeremiah had to believe that God is able to do the restoration in His time. Jeremiah had time and again witnessed God's word coming to past during his ministry as a prophet to Israel. **God assured Jeremiah that He is able! God is able to bring to past whatever He has promised despite of the conquest of King Nebuchadnezzar. God is still fulfilling His promises to Israel till today!**

### **Conclusion**

Praise the Lord that He changes not in His character and the promises that He has given us. The only thing that is constant in this ever-changing environment is God. Whatever He has called us to do will be provided for when we honor Him in our lives.