

Jesus' Third Appearance To His Disciples After His Resurrection.

Text: John 21:1-14

Suggested Hymns:

768, 102, 101, 96, 179

- 1) The Disciples' fishing Expedition
- 2) Jesus standing on the shore
- 3) The meal on the shore
- 4) Lessons to learn from the text

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 21:1-14, ¹ *After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself:* ² *Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.* ³ *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.*

⁴ *But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.* ⁵ *Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No."* 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. ⁷ *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.*

⁸ *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.* ⁹ *Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.* ¹⁰ *Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."*

¹¹ *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.* ¹² *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.* ¹³

Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴ This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is of the utmost importance for our faith that we be absolutely sure of two things, firstly, the death of Christ, and secondly, the resurrection of Christ.

If Jesus did not die for us, then we are not redeemed because *“the wages of sin is death.”*¹ Therefore Jesus partook of flesh and blood *“that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”*² And Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the proof, and the seal, of His redemptive work.

Accordingly, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, *“your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”*³ and you have not been redeemed. Hence we need absolute proof for both of these facts in order to make our faith sure.

And thanks be to God, we have such proof. The testimony of Christ’s disciples to both of these facts is undeniable and bears the marks of truth on its face.

Of all these testimonies by the disciples, that of John, *“the disciple whom Jesus loved,”* is probably the most powerful, because he was an eye-witness to all the circumstances which he records in connection with both the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

John alone of all the twelve apostles stood under the cross of Jesus and saw with his own eyes how the spear was thrust into His side, which makes sure of His death.⁴ It was John who, with Peter, ran to the empty grave on the startling announcement of Mary Magdalene.⁵ John was present at each of the two appearances of Jesus in the circle of the apostles behind closed doors.⁶ John was also present at the third appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples, which is recorded in our text.

John repeatedly emphasises the certainty of his testimony, because he recorded what he had seen with his own eyes.⁷ We read in John 19:35, ³⁵ *And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.* And in John 20:30, ³⁰ *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book.*

John's narration of these events bears irrefutable internal proofs that it is the testimony of an eyewitness.

The purpose of eyewitnesses is clearly stated in 1 John 1:1-4, ¹ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life*

-- ² *the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us*

-- ³ *that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.* ⁴ *And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*

Keeping this in view, let us now study John's account of Jesus' Third Appearance to His Disciples after His Resurrection. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Disciples' Fishing Expedition.

Prior to His death⁸ and again through the angel after His resurrection⁹ Jesus had informed His disciples that He would meet them at a designated place in Galilee.

The first instance is recorded in Matthew 26:31-33, ³¹ *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'* ³² *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* ³³ *Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of*

You, I will never be made to stumble.” This was the occasion when Peter said that he would never deny Christ.

And in Matthew 28:5-7, *the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ “And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him.*

Accordingly a number of them started out, some time after His resurrection, from Jerusalem to Galilee, travelling east of Jordan and then up to the western shore of Lake Tiberias, where the event narrated in the text took place.

And right at the beginning of John’s account we find a touch of naturalness in his stating of the names and number of the disciples who were present at the events which he is about to relate. Their names are *Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.*

Having arrived on the shore, in the neighbourhood of their old jobs, and perhaps seeing some of the fishing boats putting out from shore for their night’s work, Simon Peter calls out to his companions, *“I am going fishing.”* And the others, several of whom had also formerly engaged in the same trade, immediately agree to go with him.

Entering into one of the boats they put out to sea. They worked all night, which is the proper time for catching fish, and they continued until early the next morning but caught nothing

2. Jesus Standing On The Shore.

And then, in the early dawn, as the fishermen were about to abandon their fruitless work and were pulling in towards the shore and had come within about a hundred metres of it, they saw a figure standing there. They did not recognise whom He was at first, just as Mary Magdalene¹⁰ and the two disciples on the way to Emmaus¹¹ had failed to recognise the risen Lord, probably because *“their eyes were restrained.”*

Nor did Jesus immediately make Himself known to them, but, like a prospective buyer, asked them, *“Children, have you any food?”* Upon their

answer in the negative, Jesus told them to cast out their net on the right side of the boat. When they obeyed, perhaps because they thought that the stranger had seen a big school of fish there, their net enclosed such a multitude that they were not able to draw it into the boat.

At this John, "*the disciple of quick perception,*" noticed the miraculous nature of the catch and felt that only the Master could have thus filled their net. He immediately communicated his conviction to Simon Peter that it was the Lord who was standing there on the shore.

Straight away, impetuous Peter, who had stripped off all superfluous clothing in order to be unhampered in his movements while working *put on his outer garment* and swam ashore. Meanwhile the other disciples came to shore more slowly in the boat, dragging the net full of wriggling and fighting fish. *Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish*, with what appears almost superhuman strength, supplied, no doubt, by his joy of being near his dear Lord and Master.

John could not forget, and therefore records, the exact number of fish, for it was customary for fishermen to make an exact count of their catch, and also the fact that, although they were all large fish, yet the net did not break.

John includes these details to express his conviction that it was Jesus' almighty power that had collected so many fish into that net. Notice in this whole section again the simple naturalness of the narration and the proofs that it is the account of an eyewitness.

3. The Meal On The Shore.

Coming to shore, the disciples found there a meal prepared for them. There were some fish cooking on a coal-fire and bread to eat with them. John does not tell how Jesus had provided this meal for them, but no doubt we are to infer that it was done in a miraculous manner, just as He had miraculously fed the five thousand in the wilderness.¹²

Jesus served them fish and bread for breakfast and invited them to partake of the breakfast which He had so graciously provided. While the account does not state directly that Jesus ate with them, but only that He gave them the bread and fish, there is no reason for not assuming the former.

When Jesus appeared to His disciples behind closed doors on Easter Sunday evening,¹³ *they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.* ⁴³ *And [Jesus] took it and ate in their presence.*

While Jesus' glorified body did not require nourishment, as before His death and resurrection, yet it was capable of receiving it. And it is reasonable to assume that Jesus ate with His disciples on both these occasions in order to prove to them the reality of His resurrection.

Like the two disciples going to Emmaus, these disciples now recognised the risen Lord. They were convinced of His identity by His actions as their host and table-master.

4. Lessons To Learn From The Text.

The first and main lesson, of course, is the incontestable proof which the incident provides for the resurrection of Jesus. This was the third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection.

Secondly, the text also closely resembles several features of the other incident on the Lake of Galilee, in Luke chapter 5. This is the miraculous catch of fish and then Jesus tells them *“From now on you will catch men.”* ¹¹ *So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.*

We should learn, that, while we should work diligently at our calling, God alone can *“give the increase,”* and that we should work even though we do not always see results.

Thirdly, God will not fail to provide for our temporal needs, just as Jesus provided for the disciples, and so, while working diligently in our calling, we should leave the future in God's hands and not worry about tomorrow. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Rom. 6:23

² Heb. 2:14-15

³ 1 Cor. 15:17

⁴ John 19: 33-35

⁵ John 20:1-10

⁶ John 20:19-29

⁷ John 19:35; John 20:30; John 21:24; 1 John 1:1

⁸ Matt. 26:32

⁹ Matt. 28:7; Mark 16:7

¹⁰ John 20:14

¹¹ Luke 24:16

¹² John 6:1-3

¹³ Luke 24:40-42