

Christ Shows The Never-Failing Providence Of God.

Text: John 21:1-14

Suggested Hymns:
383, 389, 346, 285, 393

- 1) Christ provides us for the task
- 2) We should seek the Lord's powerful presence in our daily tasks

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,

Today we are looking at the third miracle Jesus performed by the sea. Here we learn that Christ shows the never-failing providence of God. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Christ Provides Us For The Task

One of the strange things about many everyday opinions of religion is that people often think that certain occupations give one a sort of “inside track” with God, as if a minister of the Gospel, for instance, was a little more on God’s side than an accountant or an electrician or a secretary.

Now it is true that God’s Word says in 1 Timothy 3:1, *¹ This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.* But, on the other hand, our Lord has not said that to desire to be a carpenter or a policeman or a railway worker is to desire an ignoble task.

Rather Christ says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, ... *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* And in Ecclesiastes 9:10, *¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.*

But every once in a while, in speaking of the evident guidance of God in a given situation, someone will say, “*Pastor, I guess you see a lot of that sort of thing in your line of work.*” But this is a fallacy.

The fact of the matter is that the hand of God is just as evident to the man wearing overalls as to the man wearing clerical vestments.

Jesus was criticised for associating, not with the religious elite, but with the lower strata of society. But His answer to the criticism was, “*For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*”¹

Study the people on whom Jesus worked His miracles: soldiers, beggars, the blind, a Canaanite woman, lepers, a widow — and only rarely is mentioned a case like Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue.

Never-Failing Providence

Now why do we make this point? Because it is fairly obvious in this incident on the beach of the Sea of Galilee that we should recognise the never-failing providence of God in our daily life. What is your task? Farmer, fisherman, clerk, machine operator, typist? God provides in His own way for the tasks of today.

Simon Peter said one day after Jesus' resurrection, "*I'm going fishing.*" Six of his friends said, "*We will go with you.*" They went out, stayed all night, but caught nothing.

This is a fairly common event in the life of a fisherman. Some of you may have gone fishing and had the same results. But when Christ appeared on the scene at about daybreak, things happened that made their common tasks very uncommon indeed.

A Double Miracle

If we study these events carefully, we can see that it was a double miracle that Jesus worked here after His resurrection. The first one was, of course, that of telling the seven disciples to let down the net on the right side of the boat and causing the net to fill with 153 large fish (and yet, with that great catch, the net was not torn!).

Jesus told them to bring the fish onto the land, that their work of the night might be completed and the fish not be wasted. It is evident in this narrative that Jesus did not need, nor did He feed them with, the 153 fish but invited them to breakfast on the fish and the loaves that He was preparing over a fire of charcoal on the beach.

Therein lies the second miracle of that morning. For it is not said from where Jesus got the fire or the charcoal or the bread or the fish.

You see, it is not likely that Jesus would have carried about any money after His resurrection, since He did not even carry it on His person in His ministry. Nor does it seem at all likely that Jesus should have been busy before daybreak, shopping in Capernaum for a fire-pot, charcoal, bread, and fish.² These things happened to be there when the disciples set foot on the beach. Jesus had provided. And that was enough for them.

A Hushed Silence

Another thing peculiar to this appearance and double miracle of Jesus is the fact that there is very little conversation, only a hushed silence, on the part of the disciples.

The fact that the net became full of fish must have caused these seven to look with fresh interest to the figure on the beach, about 100 yards off. And especially to John, whom Jesus loved, all of this had a familiar ring.

They had caught nothing all night, but at Jesus' command they let down the net. They had difficulty hauling in the net — of course! John realised that it was the Lord!

Peter hears it and flings his fisher's coat about himself and steps into the shallow sea to wade ashore. The other disciples take the more careful method of coming in with the little boat, dragging the net full of fish with them.

But not one of them breathes a word from the time they set foot on the beach and all through breakfast, neither dared they ask who He was, for they all knew it was the Lord.

Nor was there any need for words at this point. Jesus' actions brought a comfort and reassurance to their hearts as if He had preached to them a most powerful sermon. The sermon in the miracle was this: The risen Lord is still with us to provide.

Jesus Is with Us to Provide

This is the reassurance that day by day, we need to live with today. Jesus is with us to provide. This He does ordinarily in a most common and workaday manner. He provides us with strength and opportunity to earn our daily bread.

But once in a while there happens in our life, with unspoken commentary, something that reminds us of the never-failing providence of our Lord.

For example. A family is motoring along a highway. Suddenly the car is swerving out of control. There is a crash. The car is demolished, later sold for junk. Two are thrown from the car; one falls out. But the most serious injury is a fractured collarbone and a facial cut. Speaking of it later, the mother said, "*It really seems a miracle that we came out of it with no greater harm than that.*"

A man is on a ladder, painting the gutters on the eaves of his house. The ladder gives way beneath his weight. A foot is twisted out of joint, the dislocation giving him much pain. In the hospital he tells of the paint having spilled all over him, so that his neighbour, horrified at the sight of his paint-covered body, thinking it to be blood, fled from the scene. As he looked back on the incident, the man said, *“You know, the Lord was with me, because it could have been far worse.”*

Some years ago a Lutheran soldier was coming through a doorway in a little village in Italy. An enemy machine gunner had a direct bead on him as he stepped into the street and opened fire. The slugs sprayed all around him against the wall of the building. Later he heard a group of soldiers discussing the incident as though they had witnessed a miracle, for not one slug entered his body. As he listened to the others talk of it, the soldier said he felt as one returning from the dead.

A motorcycle policeman was giving chase to a speedster along an expressway of a large city. As he rounded a curve beneath an overpass, travelling about 140 Km/h, something told him to take the curve wide even though it was a one-way section of highway. Suddenly a car appeared coming around the inside of the curve, travelling in the wrong direction. A narrow escape from a head-on collision at high speed! Telling of it the next day, the policeman said, *“The Lord was really riding with me last night!”*

Is This Luck

Now what would you call these incidents? Luck? Narrow escapes? I am sure that there have been such incidents in your life also. The above incidents all happened to members of one congregation.

Perhaps you could tell of a narrow escape yourself. Perhaps it happened when you drove sleepily through the night, even though your better judgment told you to pull off the road and sleep.

Perhaps in your own home you have seen the children come close to having an eye put out, or a finger cut off, or the head badly bruised. But we forget about these things quite quickly afterwards.

Luck? Scripture says in Psalm 91:11, *" For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.* And in Hebrews 1:14, *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?* To the people that experienced these events there was no need for any elaborate commentary. The event spoke for itself, telling them of the Lord's presence with them.

Bear in mind that all these things happened to laymen, not ministers. This was our Lord's lesson that whether you go fishing as did Peter and the others, or whether you go on a holiday, or simply on your job or about your duties at home, the never-failing providence of God is with you.

2. We Should Seek The Lord's Powerful Presence In Our Daily Tasks

Miracle a Prelude to Teaching

An important lesson in these miracles that we must not overlook is the fact that Jesus' actions at that early morning breakfast were a prelude to the lesson that He later taught in words.

All His appearances after His resurrection were for the purpose of teaching and preparing the disciples for the task they were to do after His ascension.

These miracles, then, underscored the following command to feed His sheep and His lambs. How would they be sufficient for this large assignment? The Lord, who had supplied them with 153 large fish and a breakfast from nowhere, would by His almighty power accompany them on their mission to guide them and give them success.

Lord's Work Still Done by His Power

This is something that we need to realise more fully and live with as a daily reality. Success in the Lord's work of building His kingdom is still given by His almighty power. Organisation, powerful personalities, modern methods — none of these things do it.

Sometimes our Lord works success in spite of the personalities that get in the way, in spite of the methods that often ignore the power of the Spirit of God, and in spite of the organisation that does not put Christ at the head.

It is His power that accompanies His church on her mission today. This should make us humble as regards our personal contribution to the work, and it

should give us courage and confidence to do His work with His power. Use the Word as *“the power of God unto salvation.”* Use the Sacrament of the Altar as giving *“forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.”*

His Presence Is Still Assured

When we view our puny efforts to serve the Lord, to live to His glory, we become fearful. So often our own efforts prove fruitless like those of the disciples who laboured all night and caught nothing. We must trust that with His forgiving love He pardons our shortcomings and makes up for our insufficiency by His sacrifice on Calvary and by His continuing loving presence with us today.

The disciples trusted in His providence even when they could see Him no more. Peter was sure of Christ’s presence and power when he took the lame man by the hand and said, *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”*³

And when they were questioned by the elders about the means by which the man was healed, Peter declared, ¹⁰ *“let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.”*⁴

This is the everyday faith that we must have: Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God, is with us to support us as in our lives we are giving glory to His most holy name. Amen.

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

¹ Matthew 9:13

² R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John*, Columbus Ohio:Wartburg Press, 1945, John 21:10

³ Acts 3:6

⁴ Acts 4:10