

How The Living Jesus Christ Makes A Fisher of Souls

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[0 : 00] We saw last week in John 20 how Jesus being raised from the dead appeared to the disciples and he appeared to them on the Lord's Day.

He loves to minister on the Lord's Day, the day of his resurrection. One of the signs that Christ did in this appearance in John 20 was to breathe on the disciples.

I believe this is the ministry of Christ as the great and final prophet. He's our prophet, priest and king and the Old Testament prophets would do a sign that was really a revelation.

And so by breathing on them, he's showing the apostles, my spirit will be breathed out on you. And we see that fulfilled in Acts 2. I believe what we have in John 21 verses 1 through 14 is another sign act.

It's another way that Christ is letting his apostles know how his mission will be carried on through them. So listen for this as you read these verses. I'll read it out loud and you can follow along.

[0 : 56] When I'm done reading, I'll say this is the word of the Lord. And if you receive it as God's inspired, infallible, clear and sufficient word, you respond. Thanks be to God. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias.

He revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, called the twin, Nathaniel from Cana of Galilee, Zebedee's sons and two others of his disciples were together.

I am going fishing, Simon Peter said to them. We're coming with you, they told him. They went out and got into the boat. But that night they caught nothing. When daybreak came, Jesus stood on the shore.

But the disciples did not know it was Jesus. Friends, Jesus called to them. Do you not? You don't have any fish, do you? No, they answered.

Cast the net on the right side of the boat, he told them, and you'll find some. So they did. And they were unable to haul it in because of the large number of fish.

[1 : 58] The disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, it is the Lord. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer clothing around him, for he had taken it off, and plunged into the sea.

Since they were not far from the land, about a hundred yards away, the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish lying on it in bread.

Bring some of the fish you've just caught, Jesus told them. So Simon Peter climbed up and hauled the net ashore full of large fish, 153 of them.

Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Come and have breakfast, Jesus told them. None of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? Because they knew it was the Lord.

Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[3 : 06] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God indeed. You may be seated. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

Let's pray. God, we saw how you have brought rain and snow, and now you're bringing forth the green grass and the wheat.

You're faithful to your promise. We pray that you'll do the same, Lord, with your word as it goes forth. You promise it will not return void. It will prosper in your purpose.

I pray, Lord, that as your word goes forth through the ministry of preaching, I pray that you will drag in more souls to Jesus Christ. For your glory we ask.

Amen. I believe this passage is about evangelism. It's about evangelism. It's about how Jesus Christ will carry on the mission of his church, and it will be set in motion by the ministry of the apostles.

[4 : 10] That's what he gives us a sign act and a picture about. So I want to walk through this passage with that in mind. The lesson, the picture lesson we could say is fishing.

Do you ever have something that you really love and you enjoy, but you're just not good at it? Maybe opera, for example, or the NBA. You're never going to be able to dunk a basketball, but you like watching it.

For me, it's fish. I love fish. I love to eat fish, whether they're cooked or raw. I love fish in any form. I'm really bad at fishing, though.

I cannot catch a fish on my own. Growing up, my dad did not like to fish, and so we never had a lot of opportunities. One time, a friend of mine had a lure like this with a hook on either end, and I got both of those hooks stuck on both of my thumbs.

In our little town, we had to ride our bikes everywhere in Brazil, and so I had a bandage on each thumb riding around like this, and I got made fun of a lot. The reason I share that is because I did have a good experience with fishing, and so we see a contrast with these disciples' failures that now God blesses greatly.

[5 : 19] So for me, the turnaround for fishing was once I was married, my in-laws, they live on the country in Oklahoma. Think of all the things they did to set me up for success. They have a reservoir. They stock that reservoir.

They have a little fishing boat. They know all the good spots. They get the rods ready. All I have to do is just jump in and do exactly whatever they tell me. We come back with all the fish. Then they clean them, and they fry them, and it's amazing.

Fresh fish on the farm. I think the disciples are a little bit like that here. God is teaching them by the living Jesus Christ. There is no greater mission you can be part of than to obey him and to be part of drawing a perishing soul in to the kingdom of life by the net of God's word.

There's no greater mission. That's the lesson. Maybe you feel like that. You love the Lord Jesus, but you're a lousy fisher of souls, and maybe you think you're hopeless.

Maybe you think, I've been distant from God for so long. Maybe just this past week, I've denied God with my life. I'm barely surviving on my own.

[6 : 29] Why should I expect any results of ministering God's word? In Matthew 117, Jesus said, Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men.

In John 21, the living Jesus Christ, he gives this church this glorious portrait of apostles bringing a net full of fish in to the Lord.

So, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, today I want to try to prove to you how the Lord Jesus Christ, who's alive, how it is that he can make someone like you and like me also a fisher of souls.

The first lesson is that he makes you see he is near you even in your ordinary work. Look at verse 1. After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

This is the same sea called Galilee in the northern part of Israel. Up to this point, Jesus' other appearances had all taken place on the Lord's Day.

[7 : 38] We walked through that last week. His congregation had gathered, the disciples were all in one place, and the Lord appeared, and he ministered among them. And then the next Lord's Day, to Thomas this time, he ministered among them.

It was his pleasure to do that. But here in John 21, it's the only appearance after Christ rose from the dead in this Gospel of John, in which he does not indicate the day of the week.

And so that's significant because it could be any day, and it could be all, and every day, the Lord Jesus is near his disciples. We go on to read that in this way he showed himself.

Verse 2, there were together the disciples, Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, which means twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, which are James and John, and then two other disciples, which are most likely Andrew and Philip, because we know all these disciples were from that northern region around Galilee.

So here are those disciples. They've seen the Lord. They know he's alive, but they don't know what their mission is. What do we do in response to this? They know that his kingdom is of heaven and not of earth.

[8 : 47] What are we supposed to do day in, day out, week in, week out, as part of this heavenly kingdom while we remain on earth? What is it? So in verse 3, without further instruction, Simon Peter says, I'm going fishing.

And they say to him, we will go with you also. So they enter their ship and they set out. I don't see this as a lack of faith or a sin in any way. Peter leads the other disciples in making a living.

It's what they knew how to do. They're doing the work God put in their hands to do. They're providing for their families. We can conclude that it's biblical and wise for fishers of souls to also have marketable skills.

Why? Because that's the pattern. They're able to work for bread. You know, Peter was a tent maker. And as he was making tents, he was discipling those God brought to him in his ordinary work every single day of the week.

We read in Acts 28, 30 that when Paul lived in Rome, he lived there for two whole years. At his own expense. And he welcomed everyone who came and he preached boldly.

[9 : 59] So on that night, these men of Galilee of the northern part around the sea, it's dark. They're likely hungry. They're tired. They're feeling the pressure of providing for their families.

But they caught nothing. And they know what they're doing. They're professional fishermen. It was God's providence that they would not catch anything because there's a much greater lesson to be learned.

Look at verse four. When the morning came, Jesus stood on the shore. There they are in their ordinary work. And there's Jesus Christ alive, the living God.

Where does he want to be? With his people in their ordinary work. He's right there. The disciples did not know that it was Jesus, though. As I was reflecting on these first few verses, I thought of many moments throughout my week in my ordinary work where I didn't even know but Jesus is near me.

Think of the lowest point you had this week with your household, with a relationship, or maybe with work. You were low. Isn't it easy to forget that our Lord Jesus is alive and he's with us.

[11 : 09] He's near his disciples every day of the week. And he loves you to see that. If you didn't see it in the moment, look back and remember just as he stood on the shore near his disciples, he stands near you every day of the week.

He is alive. And he watches you in your ordinary work. And his command, John 4, 8, is to draw near to God. God will draw near to you.

Mark 1, 17, he says, follow me. Walk with me. As you walk every day of your life, no matter what you're doing, walk with me.

And I will make you a fisher of men. There's no greater mission than to obey the living Jesus Christ in this glorious mission of dragging, perishing souls into his kingdom of life.

We do that by the net of his word. And this is how Jesus Christ makes people like you and me, ordinary as we are, into fishers of souls.

[12 : 17] We draw near to him and we follow the living Jesus Christ. He makes you see that he is near you in your ordinary work. So much of our evangelism will take place there wherever we are as we walk with him.

The second lesson is this. Before making a fisher of souls, Jesus teaches you that he alone gets all the glory for any results. Before making you a fisher of souls, he teaches you, and make sure you learn the lesson, that he alone gets all the glory for any results.

Look at verse 5. Then Jesus said to them, Children, have you any food, any meat? Did you catch anything? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you will find some.

Try to think of that scene from the perspective of the fish underwater. We know in the book of Jonah that God appointed a great fish. God caused that great fish to swallow Jonah and spit him out on the shore.

And here we read that there are 153 big fish. They're not as big as the one Jonah had. They're ones that could be dragged by a net. But we can understand from the context this would be a fish that would get you the best market price.

[13 : 37] When you drag this in, take it into the village and try to sell it. These are good sized fish. There's none of the little ones that waste everybody's time. Every fish is worth pulling in. So there's that school of fish.

All the little ones, God appoints them to get weeded out and just leaves all the big nice ones underneath the water. And he won't let them go on one side of the boat. He's going to make them wait for his instruction.

That's the sovereignty of God. A pastor named John Stott, he pointed out that to evangelize doesn't mean to win souls.

It simply means to announce the good news and leave any results up to God. Do the work of an evangelist. God has commanded it, obey and leave the results to him.

He's the only one who can give results anyway. In Matthew 13, 47, Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea and it gathers fish of every kind.

[14 : 44] Christ in Matthew 13 was already envisioning this picture lesson for them. And beyond that, he was envisioning the throne of heaven. Revelation 7, 8. John, the same apostle, he testifies, he says, I beheld a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.

And they all stood before the throne and before the Lamb. And they were clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands. And they cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation belongs to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.

And if Jesus is your Savior and your Lord, you are one of those fish. You are one of those of that great number from every people, nation, tribe, and tongue. And the word of God went out like a net and it captured you and it brought you to Jesus.

God teaches us that he alone gets all the glory for any results. Paul testified of this in Romans 11, 36.

For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever. Amen. What do we do in response to this awareness that God gets all the glory and he will teach us that one way or the other?

[16 : 07] We draw near to him. We follow him and we ask him to make us into fishers of men knowing that any results will come from his appointment alone. The third lesson is this.

The living Jesus Christ, he calls you to love him above the results of fishing. The living Jesus Christ calls you and me to love him, the person of Jesus, above any results.

Verse 7, Therefore, that disciple whom Jesus loved, that's John referring to himself, he said to Peter, It is the Lord. When Peter heard that, it is the Lord here in our ordinary work.

We can assume Peter's ears were thrilled to hear. The Lord, he was going to drop everything else. When Simon Peter heard this, he put his fishing cloak around himself for he had taken it off.

So Peter's hands let go of the net. Instead, they pick up the clothes to be presentable to his king and he cast himself into the sea. Peter couldn't bear to stay away from Christ a moment longer than he had to.

[17 : 20] Then in verse 8, the other disciples came in a little ship because they weren't far from land. It was about 200 cubits and they were dragging the net with the fishes while the Lord Jesus stood on the shore waiting for them.

Can you see that in your mind's eye? This glorious scene? This is a picture of how God brings souls into his kingdom.

The Lord stands on the shore. He stands in heaven. The Lord appoints the fish. He appoints the souls he will bring in. Then he appoints and equips and instructs his fishermen.

When they obey, they bring those souls to present them with satisfaction and joy back to Christ himself. Matthew 6, 33.

We're told to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things he will add unto you. Do what he has commanded. Obey him.

[18 : 30] There's no greater mission we could be part of than to casting the net of his word, watching him put into that net every soul he has appointed unto eternal life.

And then all that we do is like these stinky, smelly disciples that are sweaty. We labored, but we did nothing. We failed when we were on our own strength. We obeyed you. You did it all.

And we dragged them back up, presenting it to the Lord. Back to you, Lord. This is your work. It's unto you. Receive what is your due. All glory be to God.

Follow him. He is alive. And as you follow him, he promises he will make you and me and each one a fisher of souls.

There's no better mission we could be part of him. So draw near to God. Follow him. He's alive. Fourth lesson I see is this.

[19 : 28] The living Jesus Christ, he makes all the provisions to nourish and strengthen you who he has made a fisher of souls. That's a fear, isn't it?

I'm going to obey the Lord. I'm going to seek first his kingdom. What about my needs? What about all those things I want and count on in life? I believe we see in the next few verses how he makes all the provisions and he nourishes and strengthens every single one he makes into a fisher of souls.

In verse 9, we see as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish laid on the fire. The best fish I've ever eaten in my life was in northern Brazil, a little town where my parents still live called Boa Vista.

The name of the fish is tambaki and it's got fat inside of the skin and so they cut it in half and they set the skin of the fish on the coals and it just slow cooks with rock salt on top as it starts to bubble and boil and get crispy on the edges and it's a flaky white fish.

It's so good and I'm imagining what Jesus made here even if it's that simple. It's bread on the coals or fish on the coals with some bread. What a meal, right?

[20 : 45] Even if it's simple, it's their daily bread. It's nourishing those whom he's called. We read in 2nd Corinthians 12, 13 that the whole body, that's the church, every single member of the body is nourished and grows from God.

It comes from him. Heaven is a banquet but as pilgrims and sojourners in this life, it's daily bread. It's manna and it's enough. It nourishes and strengthens us.

1 Timothy 4, 6 Paul wrote to Timothy as he would open up God's word to the church. He said, Nourish God's people with the words of the faith and the good teaching that you follow as a servant of the living Jesus Christ.

And Peter learned the source of a disciple's strength. In 1 Peter 5, 10 Peter wrote, The God of all grace will strengthen you, church. He could testify. God had done that to him and that's what he's writing to encourage the church as well, inspired by the spirit.

Then in verse 10, Jesus said to them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Verse 11, Simon Peter went up and he drew the net to land full of big fish.

[22 : 00] 153 of them. I told you, Jesus is acting like a prophet. He's giving them a sign act of something that will happen. How will this unfold in redemptive history?

Well, when we finish the gospel of John and we begin reading the history of the church in the book of Acts, we read in Acts 2, 41 that Peter was the one God appointed to stand up to preach the gospel and not just 153, but over 3,000 repented and believed and were added to their number that day.

God had given simple means, a simple net, just as he's given the church the simple, ordinary means of grace, the ministry of the word, prayer, sacraments, the Lord's Supper and baptism.

It's ordinary, but he's ordained it. It's simple. That's fine. Let us be ordinary in these means and let him be extraordinary. All glory be to God. God's means of saving souls like these nets as they're being drug full of these fish, they don't fail.

John makes note of that. It was full. These are experienced fishermen who spent hours mending nets and tying them back, but these nets that day did not break. They were simply obeying what Christ commanded and the means were sufficient.

[23 : 19] The nets do not break. Now I want to draw your attention to a verb that's used three times here. Two times here and then one time previously.

So look at verse six. The verb in verse six is to draw. It says that they were not able to drag them up themselves, but then in verse 11, Peter drew or dragged the net to the land full of the great fish.

The reason I highlight that verb is because Jesus uses that same verb in John chapter 12, verse 32. He says, when I am lifted up from the earth, lifted up, I will draw all people to myself.

It's the same verb. It's the same verb. It's Christ. Just as he gives Peter along with the disciples the ability now to draw in this net full of fish.

Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, draws all men to himself. That's what's in view here. John Gill saw it this way as well. He commented, this is an emblem of the whole number of God's elect brought out from the waves to the shore to Christ and ultimately to heaven.

[24 : 39] Jesus Christ makes all the provisions and he strengthens every single one that he calls and prepares to be a fisher of souls. He wants you and me to draw near to him to follow him and trust that he will make you into just that.

There's no greater mission we can be part of than to cast the net of the word and watch Jesus draw all men to himself, everyone who has an ear to hear and eyes to see his glory.

Jesus can make you and me into fishers of souls through our ordinary work as we trust the simple means he's commanded.

So draw near to him and follow him. Well, the fifth and final lesson I see here for us today is that the living Jesus Christ, he abides with those that he has made a fisher of souls.

He abides with you in this work and he proves again and again to you and me I am alive. Look at verse 12, Jesus said to them come and dine.

[25 : 48] He's inviting them to stay, to eat, to abide. In John 15, 4, he had told them abide in me and I in you. In verse 12, we read that none of the disciples had to ask him who are you knowing that it was the Lord.

Isn't that so true? When you're abiding with Christ, you know it. You know it. In verse 13, Jesus then came and he took the bread and gave it to them and also the fish.

Not only did he prepare and make provisions, he also personally is nourishing and serving them just like he does you and me. The living Jesus Christ, he's not in a hurry with you.

He lingers, he hosts, he serves, he communes and his disciples abide with him.

Revelation 3.20, if anyone hears my voice, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with me. John makes the comment in the last verse of our sermon text, verse 14, that this was the third time Jesus showed himself.

[27 : 00] to his disciples after he rose from the dead. He's dining and communing with his disciples to prove to you again and again that he is alive.

There's no greater work than walking with the living God and watching him draw in those he's appointed to alive by the means he's commanded. Have you gotten that experience maybe in a very small way like we read of sowing a little bit or watering a little bit and watching God give the increase in the soul in a life?

Isn't it true that there is no greater mission, no greater work we could be part of? When we first moved to Colorado we had one child we were happy we were very poor we were barely being able to pay our bills and climb out of student loans we were still wanting to find a biblical church we had almost thought those don't exist in Colorado there are many though now I've come to see during that time I was you might find it hard to believe but I was able to play soccer once or twice a week and we had an indoor soccer team and our team colors were Brazil we were yellow and there was one guy Pedro who still is the best I'll say he's the best soccer player I've ever played with at least in Colorado maybe in the USA he's an amazing soccer player and he was on our team his story is that he had crossed the border from Mexico to the USA twice one time he was with a group and he was very little and he had to go back and then the next time his relatives all abandoned him and he was a teenager and all alone as a teenager crossing the desert he had stories of how he almost died but he didn't make it here he got a girlfriend they had two children and he was working a couple jobs one of his jobs was at McDonald's and on the soccer team one of our other friends was going through a divorce and I just commented something like we should pray for him and his family because we could tell he was really down that was it

I didn't do a better job of bearing witness or sowing a seed in God's providence though there was one night where Pedro texted me if he could just come over Andrea was working a night shift at a nursing home and so he came over and he just broke down he was on his knees he was weeping he had said how he just knew there was something missing in his life a couple of Jehovah witnesses young people came by and knocked and he tried to talk with them and he said he felt even more confused and more darkness he didn't know who else to reach out to his wife was going to leave him and his boss lied and got him fired instead of her at McDonald's and in that night the Lord through the simple ministry of the word I didn't have anything to say beyond reading some verses and the Lord gave him a new heart I believe and the Lord started putting his life back together his wife didn't leave him a longer story but the Lord restored him back to that job he had at McDonald's he had to keep changing phones because of his job he took a job in Pennsylvania on an oil rig and so I lost touch but I pray for him when God brings him to mind and it's such an encouragement there's nothing I will do it's nothing of me it's nothing of any one of us but God knows those that he will draw to himself and when he does he gets all the glory we believe Jesus is alive he's working we stay close to him he abides and he ministers and we simple people like us broken with all of our own problems we get to be like these fishermen we get to be ones who he uses to drag another soul to the shore where Jesus Christ stands ready to receive them we read in Luke 15 there is great joy in heaven and that joy and rejoicing is led by the angels around the throne of God and it's over one soul who believes and repents who becomes a follower of Jesus Christ we get to be part of this great mission don't you want that you don't want the results you want Christ himself like Peter you want to be with him and as you're with him he makes you into a fisherman of souls let's pray that he'll do that through us in powerful ways just one soul that he'll bring before himself for his glory let's pray

Lord we ask that you will take ordinary people like us common simple workers and make us part of this glorious mission it's your mission on this earth the salvation of souls Lord some of us are weary and tired we ask that you please nourish and strengthen us today Lord we confess you do all the real work you do all the heavy lifting you are the one who draw all men to yourself Lord you are the one who give the increase you're the Lord of the harvest we praise you that you have made our hearts free and so now we rise we go forth and we follow thee for your glory we pray amen we'll take some time to respond to the long gospel that you've heard I invite you to consider what is that next step of obedience that God is calling you to today maybe some here you are one of those great fish this is the day that the net of God's word is drawing you to Christ believe repent follow him maybe for some of you it's you need to grow as a disciple it's not it's not about being a nominal Christian and being part of a Christian subculture that's not enough you want Christ himself you want to grow you want to walk with him you want to learn what it means to commune with him and for him to prove over and over he's alive and he'll nourish you by his word be discipled and grow in your faith maybe for some it's to become more of a fisherman become a member of the body be all in with his kingdom disciple others sharpen your understanding of his word and respond to the Lord now he will draw you one way or the other praise him for his work in your life let's pray smth a big ball of his bride and please follow it's not a big thing though here and then hey don't know how the other but the other cycle come to me where this

[34 : 02] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Well, I invite you to continue responding to the Lord in obedience.

And we'll do this next by taking of the Lord's Supper. We share the Lord's Supper together every week. Jesus said, as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me.

To partake in a worthy manner, according to 1 Corinthians 11, 17 through 34, we must treasure Christ and examine ourselves. If you love Jesus Christ and rest in him alone for salvation, as he has offered to you in the gospel, if you are a baptized member in good standing of a local church that preaches the gospel of God's free grace, and if you are living in an ongoing repentance and gratitude in Christ, then this supper is for you.

And that includes you who are visitors. We welcome you as well. However, if you have not received Christ as your only salvation, we ask that you abstain from this sacrament now and instead reflect on the gospel message that you have heard today.

[35 : 55] And out of the care for the souls of those who are still younger, like children, we ask that they partake only after being discipled by a pastor within the church for baptism as their first act of obedience.

Last week, I explained a little bit.

I want to clarify a bit more. We believe that Christ is spiritually present with his church. Do you believe that? Christ is spiritually present, and he loves to minister among his congregation.

So that's why this is more than a remembrance. It's an actual spiritual partaking, a spiritual communing with the living Christ who is with us. I tried to explain the Zwinglian, you know, reformer.

He said the vessels of the Lord's Supper should be wooden because it's just a remembrance. And then Luther said there's not the Catholic transubstantiation, but the elements become, you know, the body of Christ because Christ says this is my body.

[36 : 58] And so John Calvin had the mediating position. Jesus said, yes, this is my body. This is my blood and do this in remembrance. So in Acts, we read that Christ is in heaven waiting until the time of his second coming.

So he's in heaven, but he's also bringing refreshing from the presence of the Lord. So he's also present with his people. Both are true. And that's why the Calvin view of the Lord's Supper is the silver.

It's not wood or gold. It's the silver. It's an already not yet. He's with us, but he's in heaven. And one day his kingdom of heaven will be fully on the earth as the waters cover the seas.

We take this remembering, looking forward and longing for that day. If you long for Christ returning and you believe that he is alive and he's with his people, then that's what you're proclaiming when you come up to enjoy the Lord's Supper today.

You may be served. Thank you. Thank you.