

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn again to John's Gospel, John chapter 21. I'm not going to read what we read here already, but we find the beginning there.
- It tells us after this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, or Gennesaret, or Galilee, and he revealed himself in this way.
- And we find that Simon Peter had said to the other disciples that he was going fishing, and they said, we will go with you, and so on. It was coming towards the end of this Gospel, the Gospel of John, a couple of weeks ago, we saw that Jesus had revealed himself to the disciples.
- And here he is again, coming to reveal himself in probably what is the most famous stretch of water in the Bible. Because so often we read of many of the wonderful things that Jesus did.
- He did on this water, for instance, like where he walked on this water, and the wonderful things he taught from the shore, and sometimes even from a boat.
- [1 : 17] Remember one occasion where he pushed the boat out a wee bit, or they pushed the boat out and he taught from the boat. So it's a stretch of water that was absolutely full of biblical significance.
- Any person who goes to Israel, it's one of the places that they want to go. They want to, if possible, cross the Sea of Galilee, because it is just so full of biblical history, and particularly associated with the Lord Jesus.
- So we find here that several of the disciples have gone fishing. And some people are very critical of the disciples at this point, because they're saying, right, here are these men that Jesus called, and Jesus was teaching, and Jesus had told them that they were going to be engaged in a program of evangelism.
- Jesus had called them from the fishing, and had told them that they were now going to be fishers of men. So here we find they've gone back fishing. It's like they've given up.
- Some people are very critical of them. But I don't, to a certain extent, I don't personally feel that, because we've got to understand two or three things.
- [2 : 30] First of all, this fishing trip was initiated by Peter. And yes, the language would indicate, when Peter actually says here, I am going fishing, it does, the language almost indicates, I'm going back to the fishing.
- Certainly he was going fishing that night, but the language has had almost the suggestion that, I'm returning to the fishing. But the other disciples say they join with him, because, well, this is what they knew to do.
- But the reason, I don't think we ought to be too critical, of them, is, in the first place, yes, we can understand Peter. Because when Peter says, I'm going fishing, I'm going back to the fishing, I think we've got to remember that, where Peter has actually been.
- Remember how Peter denied Jesus, so terribly. Not just a little sort of, I don't know, but with vehement denials, with oaths, with cursory, he just really, in the most public way, denied any knowledge that Jesus meant anything at all to him.

And he did that with the enemies of Jesus, in the presence of Jesus himself. You remember how Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and, of course, we read of how Peter went out and he wept bitterly.

[3 : 50] It broke Peter's heart. But you almost get the impression that, for Peter, I'm sure he often thought, there is no way back for me. I still love Jesus.

And I'm sure Jesus still has a place in life, but I will never be where I once was. So you can understand, to a certain extent, why Peter's talking about going back fishing. But what we've also got to remember is that Jesus told the disciples the message that he left with them was to go to Galilee, and it was there that he would meet with them.

So that's what they've done. So they have been obedient to Jesus, they've gone back to Galilee. And where's Jesus going to meet with them? He didn't say. But the most likely place that Jesus would meet with them was where he first met with them, which was, we read about, well, it wasn't the very first meeting, but this is where he actually called them.

We read about that in Luke chapter 5. So I don't think that what the disciples are doing or their location or their place, that there's anything there that we can say, well, it's very easy to pass judgment and to look for the negatives.

But the disciples have gone where Jesus has told them to Galilee, and they've gone to the place where he first called them. So, as I say, I don't feel any level of criticism of them for doing that.

[5 : 15] But anyway, they've gone out fishing, and it's been a poor night. In fact, it's been a disaster. And I can imagine that, particularly Peter, must have felt awful. Because when Peter said, I'm going back fishing, Peter is really saying, I'm going back to do the one thing I know how to do.

Peter was a good fisherman. But when he would be coming back after fishing, having caught nothing, he must be saying to himself, I can't even do that now.

He probably has felt that his personal world has caved in. And maybe Peter is actually feeling, and he's saying to himself, is this the way the rest of my life is going to be?

It's going to be failure. It's going to be disaster. This is the result of what I have done before Jesus. That nothing is ever going to work for me again.

And you know, sometimes we can find ourselves with that spirit. Because, maybe because of what we've done, maybe of certain things that we are and have been.

[6 : 18] We feel that the Lord will, that we feel that anything and everything that happens within our life, that this is because the Lord is punishing us, the Lord is against us. And we develop this incredibly negative spirit where we're seeing a kind of a darkness in everything.

And we feel that the Lord, the Lord is against us. Well, if you're a believer, the Lord is not against you. And the Lord wasn't against Peter. The Lord was for Peter.

And the Lord was just going to restore Peter. And he was going to use Peter more mightily than Peter had ever been used before. Do you know this one of the wonderful things about the Christian faith? It is a life of new beginnings.

New beginnings over and over again. The Lord doesn't deal with us in the way that we often deal with one another or even in the way that we deal with ourselves.

You know, sometimes, sometimes we have a real job accepting ourselves. Sometimes that can be a problem. Because when you look at your life and you have a problem accepting yourself.

[7 : 21] And that can often cripple a person in thinking that God can't accept them. They say, well, how can the Lord accept me? But we've never come to understand the fullness, the richness of his love and of his grace.

And so that would be one of the lessons that Peter was going to have to learn. That despite all that he did, the Lord was not finished with Peter. And great days lay ahead of Peter.

And that will be true of all the Lord's people. That there are always great days ahead. So we've got to learn from that. But anyway, here were these fishermen.

There's no doubt that they would have been really down. Because I think we know if you've gone out fishing, even if you go out just, as it were, just as a leisurely or for a pastime or say, well, I'm going to go out for an evening's fishing.

just for the enjoyment of it, hoping to catch a few. Even if you just go out like that and you catch nothing, you feel flat. You say, if only I could get one.

[8 : 32] Because there's something sort of demoralizing when you don't get anything. And it's not just the comments that you might get when you get home about being a poor fisherman. There's something that deflates that you can't, you just say, just even one.

But these men, it wasn't just, they weren't going out as it were, just in a wee sort of social outing or just for the enjoyment. This was out of necessity. Because again, we can't be critical of them because they've got to keep themselves.

They've got to provide for themselves. Got to provide for a family. Peter was married. And we know, we don't know the home circumstances of them all, but they would have to provide.

So, to go out and spend the whole night and come back with nothing was obviously something that was very demoralizing. But anyway, as they're coming back, tells us verse 4, just as the day was breaking, here's just, it's the dawn of the day, we find that Jesus stood on the shore.

And again, looking at the language, it just, it shows us that it's as if he just appeared on the shore. That one moment he's not there, the next moment he is there.

[9 : 41] And of course, the disciples don't recognize him. Again, we've looked at that in the past about their failure to recognize Jesus, but there will be the added difficulty here because the daylight was very poor.

It was just the dawning of the day. And Jesus asks them, have they caught anything? And in fact, the language is very kind of colloquial at this point. He's really almost saying there, haven't you caught any fish?

Go on, try on the right side of the boat and you'll catch some. Now, Jesus knew that they hadn't caught any fish. But what Jesus was doing was what he's so good at doing, initiating a conversation.

And you'll find so often in the Bible that that's, Jesus began, like for instance, the woman at the well. Or Levi, or Zacchaeus. Often, you find that it's Jesus who initiates it.

And that's again what we find here, that's Jesus who initiates this conversation. And Jesus is speaking to them and the wonderful thing about the disciples is that they respond and they listen.

[10 : 50] And what we've always got to remember is that Jesus is always speaking to us as well. He's speaking to us today, every single one of us. He's speaking to us through the word. You know, every time we come to God's house, we must pray that.

Lord, help me to engage with you. Help me to hear you. I'll hear what God the Lord will speak, the psalmist said. To his folk, he'll speak peace. And the Lord, this is his word.

And we're always seeking that the Lord will open the truth to our hearts. And we should always be coming praying, Lord, speak to me today. Give me what I need. Give me food for my soul.

Give me wisdom. Give me direction. If I need rebuking, rebuke me through the word. But Lord, speak to me. The worst thing is when we come to the Bible, come under its truth, under its teaching, and we get nothing.

That we come in and we go out day in, day out, week in, week out, and it's just like a, it's just like meaningless. It's just words and they pass by.

[11 : 52] But what we're looking for is that the Lord will engage with us and that we'll hear something that will help us, something that will be food to our soul.

So the Lord speaks to us. He speaks to us in different ways, of course, but the primary way, the main way, is through his word. But again, sometimes the Lord speaks to us by way of getting our attention.

Sometimes through his providence, through the things that happen in our lives. And I'm sure very often, I'm sure we all look back over our life and we're aware that certain things and certain circumstances in God's hand opened our ears much more or that we began to listen to the word in a way that we hadn't before.

I can look back in my own life and I can see how God, how he, in through the circumstances of life, that he's speaking to us, he speaks to us, he speaks to us individually in our own little personal world.

He speaks to us in communities. He speaks to us nationally and internationally as well. And so we've always got to be seeking that we will hear what God the Lord will speak.

[13 : 13] Anyway, Jesus, says to them, he had to go and to cast, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. Now I find this quite amazing because initially they don't know it's Jesus.

Now you put yourself in the disciple or these fishermen's shoes. They've spent all night fishing. They've drawn a complete blank.

They're demoralized. They're flat. These men remember that that was their life before they began to follow Jesus. They knew every part of the water.

They knew the spots to fish. They knew the run of the water. They could work out the way, the winds, the directions and where was best to fish, when was best to fish.

They'd caught nothing. And I would imagine if you were and or if I was there and you'd come back in and a stranger says to you, I'll go back out and throw the net on the other side.

[14 : 16] She would be saying, not a chance. What do you know? I've just spent the whole night, we've spent the whole night and we've got nothing and we know these waters. That's what you'd think would probably be the automatic reaction but there was something about the manner, the voice, the authority, the command, because it's quite amazing because at this point they don't know that it's Jesus and yet they turn the boat back and it just shows us very simply the power that is in the voice of Jesus, the command.

And that is so often what we miss. When Jesus speaks a word of command then there is always response.

That's what happened. That's why Peter was able to walk on the water. When Jesus said to Peter come, Peter walked on the water. It was in response to the command of Jesus.

And that is why we need to ask the Lord that he will command life into our heart. If you're here today and you don't know Jesus as your own personal saviour, do you know what I want you to do?

Ask him, Lord, command life into my life. Command, help me, Lord. May I hear your voice today saying to me, come.

[15 : 43] May I hear your voice today saying to me, believe, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Help me, Lord, to believe that.

Do you know if you really pray that, if you're really urgent and sincere and seeking the Lord in this way and in this manner, the Lord promises that he will respond to that.

We're told, ask and you'll receive, seek and you will find, knock and it shall be open to you. Nobody ever really sought the Lord in vain. So we find that the Lord has been speaking to us, speaking to them, and of course they go back out and they throw the net out onto the other side of the ship.

And they catch so many fish, it tells us that, so they cast it and now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish.

And here is Jesus as it well, reenacting the very scene that we find three years earlier. And I don't know if it's at this moment or when, but it's very obvious that John is the first to discover that it's Jesus.

[17 : 02] Because John says to Simon, it is the Lord. Now, I don't know at what point, maybe the disciples had a suspicion before, but John is absolutely convinced.

Everything is coming together. This is, they've gone kind of full circle. from three years earlier when he had called them, and here they are, they're back at the beginning, but they've gone all the way around.

And John, his eye is keen because John is a heart of love. And love will always see, love senses, love responds. And so, John, John sees straight away that this is Jesus.

Now, I think there's one or two very interesting things here because we find Peter's reaction is exactly what you would expect. That's one of the things about the Christian faith, which I love, about Christian discipleship, about Christians in general, is that although we have been conformed to the image of Jesus Christ day by day, we still retain the uniqueness of our own individuality, our own personalities, our own characteristics.

And yes, there is a breaking process going on, a changing process, a molding process, so that we're becoming more and more and more like Jesus, even although we don't feel it, but this is what is going on.

[18 : 37] Yet, having said that, there is still, we retain who we are. And that's what we find here with Peter and John.

Their individuality is coming through. John is a reflective one. Remember when they ran to the tomb, when the word came, how did they react? When they reached, Peter went straight in.

It tells us John stopped. John stopped. He was looking, he was considering. When John arrived first, then Peter came round, but Peter went straight in. Typical Peter.

And here's John again, he says to Peter, it's the Lord. What does Peter do? Well, just what you would expect. Peter jumps into the sea, and no doubt he's trying to swim a shore to see Jesus.

See, this is the spontaneous, this is what we love about Peter. He's just himself. And although sometimes he gets it wrong, there's something beautiful, just being ourselves.

[19 : 42] And the Lord will work in us as we are. There's nobody as good at being yourself as yourself. But the Lord, the one thing is always say, Lord, help me every day to become more like yourself.

That's who we need to mirror. That's who we need to be like. And so we find that Peter jumps into the sea. And I think one of the things that it shows us here is how important Jesus becomes to the soul that's burdened.

Remember, Peter has a burdened soul because of what he has done to Jesus. And when Peter realizes this is Jesus, what does he do?

He jumps straight into the sea and heads for shore. Because I find this quite remarkable. They have just had, here are fishermen who just had the best catch fish that they probably had since three years earlier.

They've had this amazing catch of fish. And you and I know that when fishermen have a good catch, there's something, I'm not in any way indicating that there's a wrong pride.

[20 : 57] There's a right pride in life. It's like a job well done. You can almost see it in the very way that fishermen stand as a boat comes in when maybe they're busy. but there's this sense of triumph, sense of having had a good night's fishing.

There's an air of satisfaction, of a well done about them. And you'd expect Peter to almost gloat in that and say, oh, this is brilliant.

It's turned round for me. Look at all the fish. No. He's left his net, he's left his boat, he's left the catch, he's left everything. And away he goes to see Jesus.

And that's what it's like for a heart that's been burdened and troubled and then all of a sudden sees Jesus. The relief, the desire, the want, the need.

That's who I want, that's who I need above everybody else, above anything else. And so we find this a lovely picture of just the primary place that Jesus has within a person's life.

[22 : 06] And so we find that eventually they make their way to the shore. And the boat comes in as well. And I think Jesus is teaching the disciples here one or two very, very important lessons.

And it's becoming very clear that without him they can do nothing. You see, Jesus is teaching them spiritual lessons through a very physical work. and Jesus is showing to them, look, you've labored and you've labored and you've labored and you've got nothing.

You need me. Now, Jesus, this is, you see, it's for the disciples, it's a spiritual lesson. And I think it's one of the things that the church has to learn again and again and again.

That without the Lord, we can do nothing. And even, it doesn't matter what we attempt to do, and it's important to do, the church mustn't sit back and just say, ah, well, this is how things are.

We have a duty to evangelize, we have a duty to bring the gospel to others. But if ever we trust in ourselves, in our own ideas, or our own methods, or shift the focus, and it can be so subtle, where we shift the focus from the Lord to what we're doing, it won't work.

[23 : 29] It has to be in utter and absolute dependence upon the Lord. And possibly that is why in the third world just now, the gospel is flourishing and growing in so many areas of this world, world.

Because people are relying on the Lord, and it's a very simple way they're working. It is living the gospel and witnessing. Witnessing and living and praying.

And the gospel is flourishing. Because there is this just utter dependence upon the Lord in their witness. It's how the early church flourished. And it's vital for us to learn, to trust the Lord.

And as I say, it is so subtle. Because we think we can be trusting the Lord. But far too often we don't.

Because we always want, we always, it's natural to us, we want our part to play. We want to believe that we have something to do with it. We always think that.

[24 : 34] Now, don't get me wrong. We have to work. We have to do. But let all our doing be clothed in prayer and an absolute dependence upon the Lord.

Because he will not give us glory to any other. If he sees that we're wanting to take the glory to ourselves, or want to take some of the glory to ourselves, the Lord will say, no, it's not about you, it's about me.

So, this is one of the things that the Lord is teaching the disciples. That without him, they can do absolutely nothing. And then we find Jesus inviting the disciples to come and to eat.

Come and have breakfast. And of course, none of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and he took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

And so there's this lovely moment where Jesus is once again sharing and bringing bread with the disciples. But see that invitation with us, we close. There's a lot of other things we could say, but we're moving through it quickly.

[25 : 37] Come and have breakfast. Or come and eat. Or come and dine. There's a program today, Come Dine with me. Very popular. Well, that's actually what Jesus is saying.

Every day, come, dine with me. Come and eat with me. Because that's what we have here. Jesus is the bread of life. He's the water of life.

Jesus, we're told in scripture, that he's milk, he's honey, he's wine, he's everything. Every nourishment, everything to satisfy us, is found in Jesus.

Far too many people live their lives as if they have no soul. Far too many people have no interest in the spiritual. I hope there's nobody here today like that.

the Lord has given you a soul that's going to live forever. And that soul needs to meet with the Lord. That soul needs the company of the Lord.

[26 : 41] That soul, your soul, needs Jesus today. And I would ask you that you would come and dine with Jesus because he's inviting you. He's asking you, even now, to come to him.

You know what he says in the Gospels earlier on as he's teaching one time. And he talks about the marriage feast and about those who were sent out.

And the message was this, come for all things are now ready. That's where we are today. It's all ready because Jesus has done it all.

He's simply asking you to come and feed on him. Let us pray. O Lord, we pray that we may indeed rejoice in the truth.

And we give thanks, O Lord, that you're able to speak to us through it. We pray that we will have that dependence upon you because it is so easy, it is so subtle, to shift the focus ever so slightly from you to ourselves.

[27 : 50] and so we pray, Lord, to forgive us when maybe we even get in the way of your work. Help us, Lord, to be open to your guidance, that we may be ready to do what you ask us, and ready to go where you will tell us.

And help us, Lord, to be those who will seek to follow the Lord. Lord, we pray that you will bless the cup of tea, coffee, in the hall after, and that you will guide us to our home safely, that you will lead us throughout the day, and lead us throughout the week, and need that you will be our guide all through our life.

Take away from us our every sin, in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude our service singing from Sing Psalms, Psalm number four. Sing Psalms, Psalm number four, and the tune is Ayrshire, it's the beginning of the psalm book, it's on page four, Psalm four, from verse three to the end.

Know that the Lord has set apart the godly as his own, the Lord will hear me when I call and my request make known, in anger do not break God's law, consider and be still, present a righteous sacrifice and wait upon his will.

Oh, who can show us any good? I hear so many say, O Lord, shine on us with your light, show us your face, I pray. You filled my heart with greater joy than others may have found, as they rejoiced at harvest time, when grain and wine abound.

[29 : 31] I will lie down and sleep in peace, my heart will rest secure for you alone, O gracious Lord, will keep me safe and sure.

June is here, these verses. know that the Lord has set apart the godly as his own.

God's law, the Lord will hear me when I call and my request make known.

God's law, God's law, consider and be still, present our righteous sacrifice and wait and wait upon his will.

Oh, who can show us any good, I hear so many say, O Lord, shine on us with your light, show us your face, I pray.

[31 : 26] You filled my heart with greater joy than others may have find, as they rejoice at harvest time when grain and wine abound.

I will lie down and sleep in peace, my heart will rescue for you alone.

O gracious Lord, will keep me safe and sure.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. feast and so leave them and keep him Jup for one hour to top and see you