

John 21:1-14

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[0 : 00] We come today to the fourth of the appearances that we see in scripture that Jesus makes after his resurrection from the dead.

! The first we read of is the appearance to Mary who went to inquire to find out what happened and she wanted to pour perfume on the body of Jesus.

And she discovered he had risen from the dead and now asked her to go and tell his disciples.

Then we have the first record of his appearance to his disciples when they were all gathered in the room all afraid of all wondering what will happen to them now that Jesus had died.

And we read that in verse 19 to 23 of John 20. Then the second appearance we read of is what we learned last week where Jesus having appeared the first time to his disciples gathered together with Thomas absent came as though to mainly address the issue of the doubt of Thomas.

And we saw that as a real gracious activity that Jesus would take time to appear to address one person's doubt. And we learned last week of how that appearance transformed Thomas.

[1 : 23] Today we have the third appearance of Jesus to seven of his disciples this time. And one would have expected that it would follow the same tradition of meeting them all gathered in one room in one place.

Maybe this time expectant of a visitation since Jesus was used to appearing to them. But they were found at the sea of Galilee.

And one begins to ask why did the disciples, these seven disciples, why did they choose to go to the sea to catch fish?

The Bible tells us, the Bible does not tell us exactly what transpired before they went to begin to fish. And we don't have any record as to whether Jesus had told them while you wait for my appearance, while you wait for final instructions, you can get yourselves engaged in doing something.

So several people have tried to postulate what could have happened that these disciples decided to go back fishing. All that we have as record in scripture is that in verse 3, Peter just says, I am going fishing.

[2 : 45] And the other disciples just answered, I will go with you. And this begins to pose a challenge to us as to the influence one person's decision can have on others.

We don't know what would have been going on in their mind. But it's possible that since Jesus' last appearance was about a week ago, maybe they have begun to wonder, what's going to happen to us?

What are we going to do now? We've not had any other appearance. Is he going to appear again? Will he not appear again? And not all people have the good ability of handling stress and impatience well.

I'm also a person that doesn't handle stress well. It's possible that they must have been asking themselves, now what's going to happen to us? Because they were not used to being idle.

Remember, Jesus first called them when they were already busy people at their various vocations. He called them from busy lifestyle onto a lifestyle of following him.

[3 : 57] And remember that all the time they were with Jesus, they were always surrounded by people. Whenever he performed his miracles, there were people.

So the disciples were always centers of attention. They participated in service. Remember when he multiplied bread, they were involved in going ahead to serve people.

And even during his arrest, they were surrounded by people. Suddenly, with his death, they became loners. They found themselves just on their own.

Nothing to do. Not knowing what would happen to them. Maybe that was why Peter, typical of him to be the impulsive person, just blotted out, I'm going fishing.

And who knows, maybe that is why Thomas, irrespective of the great revelation and visitation he had had, in the face of idleness, in the face of inactivity, agreed to go with Peter.

[5 : 10] Now, not many like being helpless. The natural thing for all men is to be busy doing something. We all want to be seen as being useful, being doing something that will affect someone.

And Peter and the disciples were not different. And even today, we see that many of us don't like it when we have to wait for the Lord to visit.

When there is a walk for the Lord, many times we think it's in our power and our ability to walk and be actively involved that the walk of the Lord prospers.

We struggle with the need to be patient, to wait, remembering that the walk is the Lord's. The ministry is His.

So they went fishing. And that will tell us that that night, with all their skill, with all their ability, with all their experience as fishermen, they caught nothing.

[6 : 19] A true testimony to the fact that our ability, more often than not, results in nothing. If not constituting a drawback to what the Lord would have done and the increase He would have brought.

They toiled. They toiled. And they caught nothing. Service in the vineyard of the Lord is supposed to be an activity of joy.

But when it becomes a toil, then we need to pose to ask ourselves, is it the Lord that is at work in me? Or it's just my ability that is pushing on and pushing on?

Am I going in the strength of the Lord? Because if it is in the strength of the Lord, I would have no need to be burdened. I would have no need to be under stress. And the service of the Lord will be a joy.

I share this because currently I am going through this same struggle myself. As a missionary sent from Nigeria to church plant, tendency is I find myself getting anxious.

[7 : 31] Why aren't people coming to the church? Why is it that everybody I witness who will preach to, why is he not repenting? And there are times that I find myself getting very discouraged.

But today, just as Jesus spoke, this passage reveals to us of the weakness in Peter. I see the need to remind myself that it is the Lord's work.

And he is the one who brings increase. And all I need to do is to wait on him and obey him. We have two schools of thought as to why the disciples chose to go fishing.

One group says it was because Peter had chosen to backslide. So his suggestion to go fishing was a declaration of his loss, his fall from grace, or the fact that he had backslidden.

And that was why he had chosen to now rely on himself. That is why he is inspiring the others to go back to the same profession they had left.

[8 : 45] And we see that in that action, others followed him. Which tells us that we who have begun a walk with the Lord, we need to watch our lives and our actions.

Because our actions could be the reason why others who are weaker in faith would fall and follow us onto backsliding if we backslide.

Our actions have great influence on people. And the things we say and do affect others. We may think it is an expression of just our desire.

And we don't want to have just ourselves held accountable. But as we can see in this passage, the decision of Peter affected Thomas.

Whose confession just the week before had revealed to us that he was changed from a doubting person to a man of great faith. And he brought a revelation of Jesus that none of his disciples had brought.

[9 : 54] But in the presence of another person who acted wrongly, he fell. And he was not.

Nathanael, we are told, when Jesus first saw him, he saw in him an Israelite that was honest and without guile.

And yet, in the presence of one who is perceived a leader and who took the wrong decision, he fell and followed him.

And he said, when Jesus came to the right of the world, he was not. And he said, when Jesus appeared right at the sea of Galilee, his appearance also gives us a testimony to the fact that Jesus would never turn his back on us because we have vaccinated.

He comes to meet us in the place of our fall, in the place of our vulnerability, in the place of our weakness. And he comes with encouragement, as we will see.

The other school of thought said the disciples decided to go fishing because they realized in the gathering of the disciples there was no food.

[11 : 09] And so they wanted to go and get something so that the disciples would not be a burden on people around to them. But even that action poses or comes forth with a problem because all through their ministry, they had never had need to be concerned for what they would eat or drink because the Lord provided at all times.

The Lord provided at all times. So at this time they should have known also, they should have remembered that having resurrected, he is more than sufficient to provide and meet for every need of theirs.

So Jesus comes and appears to them. And he says to them, he asks them, children do you have any fish?

Other translations, he called them friends and said friends do you have any fish? And they said no. And I am amazed at the salutation of Jesus to these people.

Why would he call people that were not in the place they should be friends? Why should he be this friendly to them? I remember that while growing up, my parents had a particular way of addressing me.

[12 : 53] If I had done anything wrong, they would call my name in full. And so whenever I hear my father saying Kephias, I knew I would begin to mentally check myself because it would tell me that I had done something wrong.

But he also had an affectionate way in which he would always call me. He had a funny way of shortening my name and he would call me K. Instead of the full Kephias, he calls me K.

And that's how my grandmother used to call me from till she died. My grandmother never called my full name. Because she would always treat me as that young small child, that loving wonderful child of hers.

It seems as how Jesus appeared to them here. I would have expected if I was Jesus, maybe I would have come there saying Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, come here. What do you think you are doing?

But Jesus comes to them and he says, Friends, children, have you caught any fish? Showing concern for them first in their pursuit, Showing concern and interest in the things they were struggling with, in the things they wanted to achieve.

[14 : 11] And they said no. And maybe that no was an expression of their frustration. Well they said no because they were wondering, Who is this man that we have just toiled, We are trying to comfort ourselves to quietly go back to, To face the shame of coming with no catch.

Who is this that dares to ask us whether we have caught any fish? But they said no. Then he told them, Throw your net on the right side.

And they had a big catch. How often we find ourselves coming up with nothing. In the night of our lives, When we toil, And we think by our efforts, by our strength, by our wisdom, by our anointing, We can achieve and do a lot for the Lord.

But in the morning, Jesus would always come, Friends, have you struggled enough? In this passage I hear Jesus speaking to us and encouraging us to desist from self trouble, To desist from trusting ourselves and trusting in our ability.

And yet, He comes to us in compassion and assuring us. It's His word and presence that will guarantee us of a fruitfulness in our ministries and in our service to Him.

[15 : 42] If our Christian lives would bring forth truth, It would be only to the extent to which we submit to His word and obey Him. The disciples would have gone home with nothing if they had not obeyed His word.

Throw your net on the right hand side. Many times, The suggestions of the Lord, Which may seem foolish to our great wisdom as we claim in this generation, Is all we need for fruitfulness and to please the Lord in our service.

So they obeyed. Then when Jesus first told them to cast the net on the other side, They didn't know who it was. But, well let's go ahead and obey to prove to Him that He does not know everything.

To prove that when experienced fishermen have failed, nobody else can do anything. But when they got a catch that the Bible says they could not draw, And yet the net did not break.

It caused them to take a second look at this man who had given them the word with such a catch. And they realized it is the Savior.

[17:07] And John said, It is the Lord. That's when Peter swam over, went and met Him. And Jesus invited them, Come and have breakfast.

My goodness. I mean this place humbles me. That Jesus would come to them in the place of their greatest disappointment and embarrassment.

And He would prepare breakfast for them. I find great comfort and encouragement there. That in my failures, in my sinfulness, in my drifting away from the Lord, When He comes to me, when Jesus comes, He doesn't come in condemnation or judgment.

He comes in love. He comes with an invitation to feast. To feast in His presence. To feast in His affection. To feast in His great love for me.

You see, all through Scripture, Jesus has always been the one coming, seeking us out. Coming in the place of our failures and sins.

[18:18] To reveal the love of God. In Genesis, it is the Lord who would come to Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening to have fellowship.

In the Gospels, it is Jesus who would always go to the disciples to call them out, to invite them, to a walk that would transform them and give them a future and a hope.

And even when the disciples disappointed Him, He didn't meet Peter at the seashore. To say, Peter, you are a very stubborn man. Each effort of mine you thwart.

Remember I have told you that Satan has sought to sift you as with and I have prayed for you. Yet you are ensuring my prayers are not answered. No, Jesus doesn't say that.

He loves Peter too much to judge and condemn him at that point, thereby destroying his faith. Little wonder, in Acts, when Peter was filled with the Spirit of God, we do not hear him being a disappointment.

[19:25] Instead, he stands as a blessing testimony to the might and the goodness of God. Lord, there is some invitation that is available for us today.

Perhaps you are here and you have been struggling and you are wondering why your efforts to please the Lord is not bearing fruit.

Please find rest in the fact that He is the Lord of the harvest. He is the Lord of the catch. He is the one who could, He is the one who had authority to cause the catch of the disciples to be a big one. And He is able to transform our lives and change our weaknesses and make us fruitful and a huge blessing. He is the God who loves us.

And in this story, He wants to remind us of how much we mean to Him. The fact that He died for us, resurrected for us.

[20:32] And He did this not to judge and reject and condemn us, but to assure us of a love that is everlasting. A love that is ever seeking to draw us into great fellowship.

That's why we are told from John 3, 16, For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish.

He who has come to seek us to give us life will not be the reason to allow us wander to the point of perishing. And in Revelation 3, 20, He is still seeking and knocking at the doors of our hearts.

Perhaps you are here and you desire to inquire more of this great Jesus. I present Him to you, not as a judge, not as one who condemns, but as one who loves you passionately.

He loves all of us. And His desire is that we will come and submit to Him and bear fruit, fruit that will abide. Let us pray.