

The Third Time Jesus Appears May 22, 2022

John 21:1-14

1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. 2 Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. 4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." 6 He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. 7 That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some 8 clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. 9 When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

The biblical story is about the 3rd time that Jesus appeared to the disciples. The Bible is referring to post resurrection appearances. This is not the 3rd appearance; there were other appearances. This is the 3rd time he met with the disciples as a group. The Scripture starts with the words "after these things." In John chapter 20 there is the resurrection of Jesus, the 1st appearance to the disciples occurred on the evening of the day of his resurrection in a room with the door locked. The 2nd appearance was the following week. Today's scripture takes place after these things have happened. This 3rd appearance is totally different from the other appearances. I will call your attention to what Jesus said during the 1st appearance "as the Father has sent me, so I send you." Notice what is happening here during the 3rd appearance - the disciples have gone back to a life of fishing. Jesus has sent them out but they have gone back to the old life of fishing.

There is a lot going on here in the scriptures. One of the disciples recognized the Lord but not at first. It took another miracle for Jesus to be recognized. Peter is zealous and ends up doing something unusual - he puts his clothes on and then jumps into the water. This was so that he would be clothed properly for the greeting. The most significant thing is the reality of the resurrection. This is not a vision, or a hallucination. Jesus is real. He is really alive. He is a real person, in a real body, taking real action. Now he is faced with a real problem. He has taught the disciples to go out into the world and make disciples. Earlier he sent them out in teams of two and they came back with great success. Then on the 1st post resurrection appearance with the disciples he was specific "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

I'm going to through some hypothetical problems. What if God said to Jesus "I'm sending you to the earth to go and save the people" but instead of going Jesus decided to stay in heaven. What if the disciples continued a life of being fishermen? What if no one ever told us about Jesus or brought or invited us to church? We would be empty. Jesus said "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." This is not the end of discipleship; this is the beginning.

Ministry is urgent and important. It can't afford to stop. Think of a sponge for example. When you stop using a sponge it gets hard and stiff. You have to soften it up for it to work well. When we stop worshiping, praying, studying, or doing outreach missions, we can develop hard hearts and callous attitudes. We can't afford to stop because it is too important. Jesus could not let the disciples go back to the old life that they were living. He makes himself known to his people. He visits them at their business. They have graduated from his intensive training and now the hour for their action has come.

The Gospel of John is clear. Jesus takes physical action. He tends to the fire, cooks breakfast and shares it. The Risen Christ takes real action. When the door was locked he showed up. He showed his wounds. This is really him with his real wounds. The gospel makes the reality of the resurrection very clear. The Risen Lord was not a vision. He is not the figment of excited imagination. This is not the appearance of a spirit or a ghost. It is Jesus and he has conquered death.

Christianity provides a direct link to God. Our relationship with the divine is truly special. Jesus physically suffered for us. Jesus died for us. Jesus conquered death. Jesus lives. I now ask you to take a moment and visualize Christ here with you. He is standing beside you, holding your hand, guiding you through life, struggling with you, and suffering with you. With Christ you are never alone, no matter where you are in life, no matter what is going on in life, and no matter what troubles you may be facing. Jesus is a calm presence in a chaotic world. He loves you no matter who you are or what you have done. Jesus is the wounded healer. He appears to you in the realm of justice, love, kindness, and humility, and he welcomes you just as you are.