

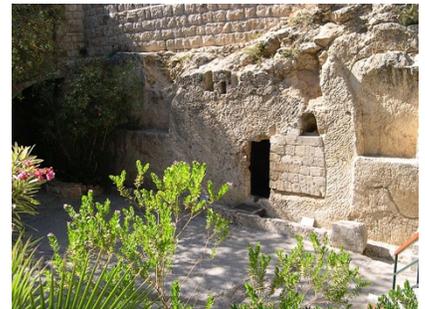
**THE RESURRECTED AND REVEALED SAVIOR**  
**JOHN 21:1-14**

What is your source of discouragement today? What is keeping you awake and night and occupying your thoughts when you have quiet moments during the day, or even when you are in conversation with friends? What is enticing you to not just buy more Tums, but buy stock in Tums because of the quantity of your purchases? What is provoking you to anxiousness? Or discouragement? Or grief? Or fear? Or anger?

While the circumstances change from generation to generation, everyone has difficulty. When I was in seminary a chapel speaker one day said something like, “every chair in your sanctuary is filled with a hurting or broken heart.” That *might* be overstated. But I don’t think so. In this life there is suffering, there are trials, and there are unanticipated and unplanned changes that radically alter our lives.

It’s always been that way, since the day Adam and Eve unwisely and rebelliously took a bite of the fruit God had forbidden them to eat. Our reality is trials, unwanted change, sorrow, loss, death, difficulty. And we are largely as powerless against those things as we are at roping a 747 to keep it from taking off on a flight.

So what will you say to that? Where is hope? Our hope is simply this: “He has risen. **He is not here.**” On this day, we have one message. On every day — any day — we have one message that will give hope and confidence in life — Christ is risen from the grave and that has made all the difference. “Christ has risen” doesn’t just mean that we have hope for the future (eternity in Heaven); “Christ has risen” means we have hope today and confidence today and strength and transformation today.



That is the reality that we find in the story of Jesus’ third post-resurrection appearance to the disciples in **John 21:1-14**. That account teaches us:

**THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE CAN TEMPT US TO DESPAIR;**  
**THE REALITY OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION GIVES US EVERY KIND OF HOPE.**

In this passage, we see **two contrasting realities** of life that demonstrate the provision and power of Christ:

1. The Dispirited Disciples’ **DESPAIR** (vv. 1-5)
2. The Resurrected Savior’s **PROVISION** (vv. 6-14)

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE CAN TEMPT US TO DESPAIR;

THE REALITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION GIVES US EVERY KIND OF HOPE.

- As we come to this passage, I want you to notice the beginning and end of the story:
  - ✓ Verse 1 = **After these things** (Jesus with the disciples in 20:19-23; 20:24-29), **Jesus manifested Himself**. This is His third post-resurrection revelation to the Eleven.
  - ✓ Verse 14 = **The third time that Jesus was manifested**... He had appeared at least four other times to others; this is the third time He has appeared to the disciples (twice in ch. 20). While He is no longer with them daily and hourly, He is consistently revealing Himself to His people.
  - ✓ It is notable that at the beginning and end of this story, John tells us that he tells us the story to emphasize the manifestation of Christ. But this also is a parallel to the beginning of John's gospel — cf. 1:14ff — He came revealing Himself, and His entire ministry to the end was one of revelation.
  - ✓ What does John mean when he uses the word **manifestation**? It is more than "appearance."
    - The word is used 3x in this passage (vv. 1, 14); 9x in John; 1x in Synoptics; it means more than just "see," but "reveal Him for who He is:" cf. 1:31; 2:11; 1 Jn. 1:2.
    - And John uses it in this passage to particularly emphasize Jesus' self-disclosure.
    - Here is a reminder that if anyone will see and know Christ, it is only because He has revealed Himself; the disciples didn't know Him by sight (nor did the disciples traveling to Emmaus, Lk. 24:13ff). They only knew Him because He revealed Himself to them — a consistent theme of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14). Since no one seeks for God (Rom. 3:11), it requires God to reveal Himself to us. And He did. And that revelation is transformative, as this story demonstrates.
- Notice also that John specifically says Jesus revealed Himself **again** — All the disciples had already seen Him. He already had a private conversation of restoration with Peter (Lk. 24:34). And now He appears to them **again** — they still need confirmation of His resurrection and to see the implications that come from that resurrection. In spite of having already seen Him, they are still discouraged and they still don't understand the implications of His resurrection for them. Yet He is patient with them and persistent with them to slowly and gently lead them to confidence in Him.
- In this encounter and revelation, Jesus gave the disciples confidence in His resurrection. That confidence was not only so they would believe in Him, but that they would be transformed by the resurrecting power of Christ — that they would know in their lives the difference that Christ makes.
- And we read the story for the same purpose and with the same intent. He is resurrected. He changed them. He can work that same transformation power in our lives. Even in our provoking circumstances when we are tempted to discouragement and more.
- So this morning we want to look at the reality of the disciple's lives, and then we want to see the reality of the Savior's resurrection power...

**1. The Dispirited Disciples' DESPAIR (vv. 1-5)** — why would the disciples be despairing or discouraged?

- The disciples **were together** — partially (v. 2). Notice that not all of them were there...
  - ✓ We know five who were there — Peter, James and John (this is the only time John refers to himself and his brother as **sons of Zebedee**), Thomas (the doubting one), and Nathanael (who is mentioned by John for the first time since 1:46ff). There is much conjecture about the two unnamed men; the point is that we don't know. Notice also that from the 12, Judas departed before the cross, and from the 11, now only 5-7 are together. We don't want to speculate beyond Scripture, but you do have to wonder where the other 4-6 disciples are. We just know they aren't together. Something happened.
  - ✓ You also have to wonder where the others are because Jesus had left instructions for them to meet Him in Galilee after the resurrection (**Mt. 28:7, 10**). Where were the others? We don't know.
  
- Peter was leading and Peter apparently made a decision based on the past (v. 3a)
  - ✓ Peter's comment, **I am going fishing** seems spontaneous. We don't know why he left...
    - Perhaps he was just filling time and wanting to make a little extra cash on the side having seen the boats at the Sea. This was his home territory and he would have been comfortable on a boat.
    - But there is also a possibility that this was a planned decision. Jesus had evidently told them to meet Him at a particular mountain (Mt. 28:16). Peter was making a decision to leave that mountain and go to fish.
    - Notice also that Peter leaves for a particular boat — **the boat** (not *a* boat). It seems he has already arranged for a boat — perhaps he has purchased it ahead of time. And he is leaving.
    - While Jesus has met privately with Peter already for restoration, we do know that Peter grieved deeply after his betrayal of Christ (Mt. 26:75) — he “wept bitterly.” Was he still struggling with regret, even after he had been personally forgiven by and restored to Christ? Perhaps.
  - ✓ Regardless of whether he is just making good use of his time or whether he is leaving Christ's calling to fish for men to go back to fishing for fish, Peter is leading the others with him.
  - ✓ We know that Peter is the leader because he doesn't even ask them to go with him, but they do.
  - ✓ Peter might have been the leader, but he was no longer a fisherman.
  
- Peter's plan wasn't working out too well... (vv. 3b-5)
  - ✓ Notice the phrase **they went out**. They got in a typical boat in the typical way at the typical time. The fishermen would fish at night because then they would have something to sell at the market first thing in the morning. They had done this thousands of times. Or was John using **night** in another sense (e.g., **13:30**)?
  - ✓ Everything was typical about this expedition — except for the results. **They caught nothing**.
  - ✓ The word **nothing** is emphatic by John (which is amusing since he was one of the empty fishermen).

- ✓ And they spent all night at it — with **nothing**. Finally, the **day was now breaking**.
- ✓ They had to be exhausted from their labors and from the emotional trauma of the previous weeks. They had been up for 24 hours and had spent the previous 10-12 hours working hard.
- ✓ And then an “anonymous” observer asks a question — **Children, you do not have any fish, do you?**
  - The passage doesn’t tell us why they can’t recognize Jesus — He is only 100 yards away; but given that the emphasis in the passage is that the story is about Him manifesting Himself, it seems most likely that He is not allowing them to identify Him (as with disciples on Emmaus).
  - He calls them **children** — it is not a derogatory word, but something akin to “lads,” or “boys.” It’s not derogatory, but His question is pointed; He *knows* they have been unsuccessful.
  - The word for **fish** is used only here in the NT — it is a reference to a “tidbit,” a morsel of fish. He is saying, “You don’t even have *a piece* of a fish do you? You don’t even have a “throw back” fish.
- ✓ Our Savior could never do or say anything with malice or with intention to harm. But He *is* making a point with them — their return to their profession, the one thing they could do well, was a failure.
- ✓ It is a reminder from the Savior that “apart from me you can do nothing” (15:5, spoken days earlier).

- **Maybe you’ve had days like this...**

- ✓ Your expectations have been unmet. What was supposed to be celebration has turned to tragedy. A simple job has turned into hard work. You’ve been disappointed by circumstances and people. And you have regrets for your own choices and decisions. *You have failed*. Ed Welch identifies regrets:
  - Things you did that were especially shameful, which means that they became public and the public did not approve of them. [School or work failures, legal problems or public immorality.]
  - Things you did that either purposefully or (more often) unintentionally hurt someone else. [Car accidents, angry and hurtful words, poor parenting, recklessness while intoxicated.]
  - Things you think you could have done to avoid a catastrophe. [“If only I...”]
  - Whatever good we know and experience in life, we know we also will have trouble (16:33).
- ✓ You are dispirited and despairing. *You have failed* and you don’t know where to turn. Watch the Savior’s provision for the disciples who also may have felt that way...

## **2. The Resurrected Savior’s PROVISION (vv. 6-14)**

- **Jesus provides the groceries (v. 6)**

- ✓ Jesus (and they don’t yet know it’s Him) tells them to change the side of the boat from which they are casting the nets. The cynic in me would say, “Really???” It might have been a difference of 8-12 feet. But the disciples complied without even asking a question.
- ✓ And there was a **great number of fish!** They didn’t have the strength to pull it into the boat, or the size of the catch might have torn the nets or capsized the boat if they were able to pull the fish in.

- ✓ Jesus didn't "happen" to see where the fish were; we are intended to understand that all night He had been keeping the fish away from the boat, and now He gathered the fish to the boat. Just as He was able to multiply the loaves and fish in His hands when feeding the 5000 and 4000, in the same way He was able to gather hundreds of fish to the boat when He needed them. He is able.

- **Jesus reveals Himself (vv. 7-8)**

- ✓ John immediately knows (v. 7) — ***It is the Lord***. Prior to His death and resurrection, that title is usually used of Jesus in the generic, polite sense of "Sir." But after the resurrection, it has a higher designation of "Master" and of subservience to follow Him (e.g., Thomas in 20:28). John's eyes were opened to see the reality of who the "stranger" on the shore was.
- ✓ It has been noted that John is often the first of the disciples to understand truth, but Peter is the first to act. That was true again here. Peter had been stripped down to his loin cloth for working so he put on his ***outer garment*** and jumped in the water to go to Jesus (the boat was too slow).
- ✓ Peter may have been contemplating a return to fishing, but he loved the Savior and he left his boat with the other disciples and went to Jesus.
- ✓ Peter's swimming lesson reminds us that when you truly encounter Christ, nothing else will satisfy you. When someone really sees Jesus, worship and fellowship are normal (20:17, 18, 20, 28).
- ✓ If Jesus Christ has been genuinely revealed to you it is impossible to be apathetic. There is no complacency with Christ when He is one's Savior. And if you are complacent, it is good to test yourself to see if you really are seeing and believing Him.

- **Jesus cooks breakfast (vv. 9-14)**

- ✓ When they got to shore, breakfast was already cooking — the fire was started, bread was available, and the fish were roasting. And Jesus says, ***Bring some of the fish which you have now caught***.
  - Some have asked why Jesus asked the disciples to bring some of the fish; a common suggestion is to encourage them that they have something to contribute to the meal. Or maybe because there weren't enough fish on the fire. (That seems incredible to consider, since Jesus just provided such an astounding catch for them; He had ability to bring enough.)
  - There is irony in the statement — who caught the fish? Well they did, but *only* after Jesus moved the fish into position! It is a reminder that they were successful only because of Him. He wants them to recognize their inability and His great sufficiency to overwhelm them with gracious gifts. It seems their contribution is only to remind them that without Christ working for them, they would have nothing to give. They didn't even have a "morsel" of fish after a night of fishing; but Jesus provided ***153 large fish*** (evidently, also more "throw back" fish).
  - [What is the significance of 153? Not the Trinity, or representative of 153 types of fish, and all the people in the world. The fishermen counted because they wanted a story to tell tomorrow!]

- ✓ Having provided the groceries and having cooked the meal, Jesus invited them to eat with Him.
- ✓ No one ventured to ask **who are You** because *they know*. John and then Peter first realized it on the boat; but now they all know and realize the One in front of them is the Lord of all things.
  - Don't take this to mean that they realized it was "Jesus" — their friend for three years.
  - They had previously asked the question "who is this" (e.g., **Mk. 4:41**). They knew then that He was Jesus of Nazareth, but they didn't understand the fulness of who He was. Now they do. Now they don't ask, because they realize that He is God incarnate, the second person of the Trinity, the Master of all things. Their eyes have been opened to see the magnitude of Christ.
- ✓ Notice one more part of this meal: it was *not* a communion meal, but as He passed out the bread (**verse 13**) it is likely that all thought about the meal they ate together with Him right before the crucifixion when He also served as host. It was a reminder of His provision as the bread of life.

• **Jesus provides some lessons.** This resurrection encounter is designed to be revelatory, to tell the disciples and us something about the risen Savior. What should we observe about Him?

✓ **Christ is sovereign — submit to Him**

- In this brief account, Jesus directs them at least three times (**cast the net**, v. 6; **bring some fish**, v. 10; **come have breakfast**, v. 12). All three times the disciples immediately acted.
- They responded to Him by following Him. He is their Lord and they submit to Him. And in that submission God was able to use them to build His church.
- Likewise, when we submit to Christ and do what He says, our lives will be stable. Remember the parable of the two houses in **Mt. 7:24ff**? The difference between those two houses (lives) was not the absence of storms — there are trials and difficulties in every life. The difference is that the house (life) that remained standing was the one who acted on what Jesus commanded.
- He is the Lord, and belonging to Him means obeying Him (**Mt. 28:18-20**). To believe in Jesus means to obey Jesus. If there is no obedience, there is evidently no faith either. Faith and submission are combined in our relationship with Christ.

✓ **Christ is gracious — trust Him**

- The catch of fish was a reminder to the disciples that they could not succeed in anything apart from Christ's provision. But it is also a reminder that He will always give them everything they need when they need it. And He is no miserly provider. He gives fully and lavishly.
- Christ is trustworthy. Life will not always be easy. For the believer, there will be many challenges and difficulties — both personal troubles and cultural difficulties and persecution. But you can trust Christ to take care of you in just the way you need (which is also the point of Jesus' final statement in this book, **vv. 18-23**). You can trust Him on this earth and you can trust Him to take you to glory. Don't look for an easy life. Look for a Christ-filled life.

✓ Christ is inviting — delight in Him (fellowship with Him)

- When I say Christ is “inviting” I mean two things — I mean that He is captivating. He is a source of joy and satisfaction. He is better than anything we can imagine. But I also mean “inviting” as a verb — He is giving an invitation to join Him and be with Him. He invited the disciples to eat with Him as an expression of fellowship and intimacy.
- And similarly, He invites all people to come to Him for salvation and life. Just because you come to worship on Easter or any other day doesn’t mean that you are a Christian. To be a Christian...
  - ... Is to acknowledge your sinfulness and your utter inability to save yourself. You’re hopeless.
  - ... Is to turn to Christ alone in faith and trust — believing that He has done two things:
    - He has absorbed God’s wrath against you and your sin, paying the penalty of sin
    - He has unshackled you from the control of sin, so that you no longer need to sin
  - ... The message of the gospel and salvation is simply that you have a debt of sin that Christ assumed for you and Christ has perfect righteousness that He gave to you. Believing that will free you from sin’s penalty and power and transform you *eternally*. Will you believe and follow Him as the greatest treasure anywhere?

**CONCLUSION:**

Notice one more thing from this story. This fishing trip seems to have been planned by Peter (though don’t be too dogmatic). But after this venture, we never see Peter fishing again. He’s done — because he has seen and encountered the risen Lord. He has been satisfied with Christ, and he won’t go back to fishing for fish.

At the end of this story, *all* the disciples have changed. Neither Peter nor any of them will ever go back to fishing for fish (or any other livelihood). They are sold out for Christ. It is this Peter who will preach in Acts 2 and 3000 trust in Christ. And this Peter who is unwilling to stop preaching Christ (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29) and was even bold to preach the gospel to the Sanhedrin that was accusing him and demanding him to stop preaching (5:30ff).

What is the reason for the change? They encountered the Christ who encountered and conquered death. They saw the empty tomb and they saw the One who destroyed death and sin that was master of the tomb. But no more. He is risen. And because He is risen and revealed, we have hope for our every circumstance.

Friends, Christ is just as satisfying for us today. Go to Him for salvation and go to Him for fellowship, and you will never be disappointed.

**BENEDICTION:** Matthew 28:5-7