



Easter Sunday
The Collect

ALMIGHTY God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

*1 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. 2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus saith unto them, **Children, have ye any meat?** They answered him, No. 6 And he said unto them, **Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.** They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, **It is the Lord.** Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10 Jesus saith unto them, **Bring of***

the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12 Jesus saith unto them, **Come and dine.** And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. (John 21:1-14)

John is my favorite Gospel writer (perhaps because he is the one under present consideration) since his writings reflect such personal touches and affections. If you review each of his works (Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelations) you will note that each end with a beautiful touch of the Master's glorious and artful inspiration. This is not to detract from the inspiration of every other Word of Scripture, but some of those words, like John's, are like the Himalayas of inspiration and beauty. This last chapter of the Gospel of St John is an example of that beauty. We shall see even more of that beauty when we cover the last few verses in our next devotion.

The favorite Bible chapter of General George S. Patton was Psalms 63. Its inherent beauty is enough even to move the heart of "Old Blood and Guts" Patton. The first two verses of that wonderful Psalm set the stage for all that follows: ***O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*** (Psalms 63:1-2) The salient point that leaps out to our hearts at the first is the time at which we should seek God – EARLY! Why would we seek Him early? Because our heart's thirst for Him and His affections, combined with the longing of our souls, drives us from our twilight sleep in dawn's early light to the throne of grace, mercy, and communion in prayer with Him.

Jesus was an early riser. In fact, He is the first fruits of those who slept in the grave. But in His earthly ministry, He always rose early and resorted, often, to the mountain to pray. He even spent nights on the Mount of Olives in prayer: ***Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple*** (John 8:1-2) Sleeping under the stars may not always yield the best means of rest and restoration, but it did not prevent Christ from rising early in service to His Father. How early did you seek the Lord today, dear friend? Or did you just this moment think of it?

Now, you will remember the words of the great Angel to Mary Magdalene, and the other women, by the Garden Tomb EARLY on the morning of the Resurrection: ***But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*** (Mark 16:7) So Peter goes fishing along with others of the disciples. ***There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.*** Where does he go fishing? On the Sea of Galilee where the Lord has said they will find Him! They fish all the dark hours of night and have caught not a single minnow. The slender and radiant fingers of dawn begin to illuminate the eastern sky, and their nets are empty – poor fellows. What terrible fortune they may have surmised! When hope is forlorn and our nets are empty, our despondent hearts may not expect the rich and glorious blessing that God may intend for us. But even with empty nets, we must stand fast in the faith. The unpretentious Hand of God looms beyond the shadows! Standing, even before the sunrise, is the One whom they have followed these past years more alive than ever. At first, they know Him not. ***But when the morning***

was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

Has Christ walked the Road to Emmaus with you without your knowing Him in your downcast heart? Has He beckoned from life's shore when your nets are empty and all seems at loss? Has He appeared at dawn's early light to make your whole day Light? Our search for Christ always begins in darkness, since our souls without Him are in darkness, and leads to the glorious sunrise of our hearts, doesn't it? Do you know that Christ will speak to your heart at moments that are least expected – even if you do not at first recognize His Holy Presence?

Christ is always concerned, not only for our hearts, but our physical well-being. *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat?* He speaks to grown and sea-worn fishermen, but He affectionately calls them "children." What a blessing to be a child of God and to know that our Heavenly Father looks over us as a doting mother her little ones. Even the grey-haired bard, and the innocent and disfigured baby on the abortionist's table, is likewise the child of God. God treasures each whether the world sets any value upon their souls or not. So, Christ inquires if they have caught any food to eat. Of course, our true food is to do the works of our Father in Heaven; but FISH will do for the moment! Christ often approaches us with a question into our well-being, though He knows our straights. When we are made more keenly aware of our depravity by a question, we are more apt to appreciate the benefit of grace to follow. *"They answered him, No."* No, they have caught nothing even after hard labor all the night long! Do you suppose that God did not intend them to catch a single fish so that His miracle might be magnified in their hearts?

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. Now, why would seasoned fisherman take such advice from a 'stranger on the shore'? They KNEW their job. They KNEW fishing. They KNEW the hours of darkness to be optimal for catching fish. Yet, a stranger tells them to drop their nets "on the right side" and they shall catch fish. Why should they believe Him or pay Him any heed? He was not tentative in His advice, but firm and authoritative! He spoke as one having authority! *"...the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority.* (Matt 7:29) Do you give your testimony in a sense of doubt or hesitation? Or do you speak with the authority and certainty of strong faith? At any rate, the proof is in the pudding, isn't it? *They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.* If we will simply follow of heavenly marching orders, with the sure confidence of soldiers who have the ultimate trust in their Commander to know the disposition of the battlefield, our trust shall be rewarded in amazing ways – and in ways we could never have dreamed possible. Even three night's fishing could not have yielded such a catch. But their nets were filled in a single drop – so filled that they could barely drag the net. These fish are like souls whom we draw to Christ through our faith and testimony.

Who is the disciple whom Jesus especially loved? It is the humble scribe of this Gospel – John the Beloved Disciple – who was meek in love and not willing to mention his name here. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.* It was John's unremitting love for Christ that revealed to him who it was that had commanded the miracle. Unlike Thomas, Peter had the heart to believe the word of a fellow Apostle. His conscience had been tormented for these past several days over his denial of Jesus. That look with which Christ had looked upon him, that third time of his denial burned in his heart

from that moment until now. But shame would not keep him from rushing to Christ just as he had run to the Garden Tomb to find it empty that early morning outside Jerusalem. The Sea of Galilee could have been aflame and Peter would have still left the boat to come to Christ. This time he did not require an invitation as on the night of the storm when Christ walked on the turbulent deep. He could not wait to come to Christ. His route to Christ covered the shortest distance between two points – a straight line; and it is the straight line which we must always follow to Christ. There are no detours of sin or darkness, but STRAIGHT to the Light as an Eagle flies to the sun!

We must never forget, in the winter of our lives, to bring those other fish with which the Lord has blessed us lest we approach the Lord on that Last Day empty-handed. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. But if one is absent-minded in his eagerness to approach Christ, others must fill the gap. As soon as we reach the opposite shore of Jordan Waters, we are blessed to see the Lord there with those fishes which we have loved, long and deeply in Christ, there with Him already.

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Christ prepares all of our needs already. All we must do is come to Him. But He desires that we bring our rewards with us so that we do not approach Heaven in poverty of souls: *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.* How many fish will you bring at your home-going, or will you arrive without friend or family? Have we labored in our own works and caught NOTHING, or have we listened and followed that perfect will of God and caught more fishes than our nets can easily hold? When Christ gave this counsel, Peter remembered his remission, and returned to gather the fish to the shore. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. These were not minnows, but GREAT fishes. Every fish (convert) that the Lord puts in your hands is a GREAT fish in the eyes of the LORD. Let us not forget to nourish those souls continually that we have caught in our nets. The significance of the number '153' is beyond the scope of this brief devotion.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, *Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.* This is perhaps an early reminder to us of that Marriage Supper of the Lamb which looms beyond the parameters of time and space. After observing the miracle of the great catch, as well as the symbolism demonstrated in the other acts of Christ, the disciples knew, without doubt, who He was. Do you know, after all of the fine-tuned and unmerited blessings you have received at His merciful Hands, who He is that has granted the favors?

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. How often had these dear Hands provided their sustenance in the Wilderness, on the Mountain Height, in the upper Room – and on the cross! Jesus gives us fish whether we catch them or not – they BELONG to Him! And not only does He give us fish, but the Bread of Heaven as well. He spreads a table before us in the wilderness, and in the presence of our enemies, provoking their unworthy hatred of us, and of Him. He opens fountains of water in the desert places, and rivers of water beside which our feet are planted.

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. Watch out, friends, for the THIRD time. It was three days that Christ was in the Tomb, and three times that Peter had denied Him. Yet, this is also

the third time that He has revealed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection. There must be some deep significance to this symbolism, right? I believe that we shall receive a greater light of this in the last few verses of the Gospel of St John in our next devotion. Stay tuned to the Spirit!