



*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)*

Our Lord made this appearance, for the third time, to the disciples who had known our Lord both before and after His resurrection. From Abraham unto John the Baptist and Zecharias, the Old Testament Church had known only the Pre-Resurrection Christ; however, by faith, they knew He would Redeem them through His death and resurrection. But the disciples had the privilege of seeing BOTH sides of the resurrection. We today see the Post Resurrection Christ in the fullness of the Promise made to Father Abraham.

The text is careful to point out the appearance of our Lord by the waters of Galilee was the third time He had appeared to the disciples since His Resurrection. He refers to His appearance to them assembled and not to the individual appearances of Jesus to Mary at the Garden Tomb, or to the two on the Road to Emmaus.

I believe this appearance is of a particular tenderness since He had first appeared to these fisherman at His beginning ministry by these same shores of Galilee. It is in the nature of human tenderness to revisit the places of our childhood and other scenes that arouse such fond memories of bygone days; so does Christ make His last reunion with these rough men of the sea by the same Sea from which He called them to be fishers of men. They are no longer crude and rough, but souls of gentle and noble love. Do these amazingly beautiful words of Peter seem to come from the pen of a rough fisherman: "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*" (2 Peter 1:19)

The surprising and early morning appearance of our Lord by the Galilean shores gives us pause to consider the manner in which He had earlier appeared, after His resurrection, to the disciples. Mary Magdalene was granted the highly esteemed honor of being the first of the disciples to see the Risen Savior. She was granted this honor because she loved our Lord dearly, perhaps, however, no more than Mary of Bethany or of John, but her love nevertheless had FEET. She came early to the Garden Tomb to anoint the body of Christ - even while it was yet dark! Coming early, she found our Lord early, too. "*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.*" (Psalm 63:1-2) This is EXACTLY what Mary found at the Garden Tomb. That Temple of God (His Body & Sanctuary), which had been destroyed on the cross, was fully restored after three days. Remember, friends, the words of our Lord: "***Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.***" (John 2:19) Christ appeared to Mary in the Garden while she was alone and agrieved. Remember the beautiful old hymn: "*I come to the Garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses; and the Voice I hear, calling on my ear, the Son of God discloses....*"

And consider the appearance to the two on the Road to Emmaus! Like Mary, these two were despondent and disparaging over the events of the crucifixion and, while they were on the way, our Lord came and walked with them. Though they were kept from recognizing Him until the time was ripe, He came to gently lead them to an understanding of the purpose of His death on the cross. He then revealed Himself fully in the "Breaking of Bread." What a Holy Communion Service that was for these two - the first of the resurrected Lord!

Christ had already appeared to the disciples in their covert room when Thomas was absent. But He appeared the second time in order to be sure that Thomas was not left out. Both times, they were astonished. So He now appears to the fisherman - Peter, Nathaniel, even Thomas, James, two other disciples, and John by the shores of Galilee. They were working and had already known of the Lord's resurrection for they had seen Him in Jerusalem.

I believe these various appearances of our Lord demonstrate how He comes to us today:

1. As He came to Mary Magdalene who sought Him early in sorrow, so He comes to us today when all hope seems forlorn. If we have demonstrated due diligence to find Him, He comes quietly and calls our name. Though we may have been weeping out of grief, those tears, as was Mary's, will be turned to tears of joy. "*weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*" Psalms 30:5 (KJV)
2. As He appeared to the disciples in the locked room, our Lord appears to us when we are burdened with prayer in worship, and we have shut the noise of the world out of our chambers. And He will also appear when our hearts are

stricken with doubt as with Thomas. *"straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."* Mark 9:24 (KJV)

3. He may appear as a stranger on the diverse roads and ways of life, opening our eyes to deeper understanding so that we may more fully know Him as He did on the Road to Emmaus. When we know Him fully, we then may have the privilege to commune with Him at the Table of the Lord.
4. He may even appear to us, unsuspectingly, while we are at our labors of life - even on the sea. These men of Galilee were seasoned and skilled fishermen. They came to fish at the right place (Sea of Galilee teeming with life); they came at the right time (best fishing occurs at night when the fish cannot see the net); they came with the right spirit (laboring all night long). They must have been a bit irritated when the STRANGER on the shore commanded, "**Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.**" But even though they did not recognize this STRANGER, His Voice nevertheless was a commanding one - so they obeyed. It is important for Christians to fish in the right place, at the right time, with the right spirit, and on the RIGHT side. We must be familiar with the nature of fish if we will catch a meal. Obedience brings an abundant reward - *"They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."* Obedience brings reward!

One of the disciples was the beloved disciple John. He held a special love for our Lord, and that love opened his eyes to who this STRANGER was. *"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. 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."* When we know the ways of the Lord intimately, we will never mistake His Voice. We may even be like Peter - slow of perception but, once we recognize that Voice, nothing will hold us back.

One last prominent point: We do not come to the Lord empty handed. He desires that we bring our own catch when we appear before Him: *"Jesus saith unto them, **Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.**"* We are invited to the Marriage supper of the Lamb, but we will be embarrassed if we come empty-handed. It is the custom of the East to always bring a dish when invited to a marriage supper. Jesus has fish already prepared for breakfast on hot coals, but He also gives us power, at His direction, to catch other fish that, though they be many, will not escape the net (but kept safe and secure by the Providence of God). *"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."* The laborers of the Lord are not without reward and celebration. Through our labors of obedience, we have the privilege to sup and commune with Him: *"Jesus saith unto them, **Come and dine.** And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord."* In the Elements of Bread and Wine at the Lord's Table, we, too, more surely KNOW and COMMUNE with Him.