

79. Jesus Appeared to Seven Disciples at the Sea of Galilee

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how they can receive the eternal life that Jesus offers to all who will believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and receive Him into their lives. In our topic today, we are going to see another of the appearances of Jesus to the disciples after He had risen from the dead. This appearance will happen in Galilee, which is about eighty miles north of the city of Jerusalem where Jesus had previously appeared.

Several of the disciples had been fishermen before they were called to become the disciples of Jesus. Mark 1:16-20 tells about Jesus calling some of these disciples while they were fishing. Mark 1:20 says, “And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.” Here, we see that the disciples left their boats with their families so they still had access to those fishing boats. Jesus had given the disciples instructions to meet Him in Galilee after His resurrection. Matthew 28:16 says, “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.” We have seen that it was more than a week before they followed these instructions to go to Galilee. We see that when the disciples went to Galilee, Peter and six others decided to go fishing. (John 21:1-3) The place where they went fishing was the Sea of Galilee because John 6:1 says, “After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.”

It is possible that Peter decided to go back to fishing because he had failed and denied Jesus three times. Jesus told Peter in Luke 22:31-34, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.’ But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’” During the night, Peter did deny Jesus three times. After the third time, Luke 22:61-62 says, “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.” Peter may have felt like such a failure that he thought that Jesus could not use him.

When Peter said he was going fishing, six other disciples decided to join him. They went immediately but that night they did not catch a single fish. Peter had experienced a similar night the night before Jesus called him as a disciple. Luke 5:1-11 talks about that night. In that case, Jesus told them what to do and then rewarded their obedience by filling two boats with fish. At that time, Luke 5:8-11 says, “When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also *were* James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.” Here, we see that Peter went back to the fishing that he had left about two years earlier. They got the same result as they had at that earlier time. They fished all night and caught nothing.

John 21:4-6 tells us what happened early that morning, “But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Children, have you any food?’ They answered Him, ‘No.’ And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find *some*.’ So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.” Jesus had chosen this moment for His meeting with the disciples in Galilee. We see what Jesus said as He called to the fishermen out in the boat. Jesus called to them from the shore, “Children, have you any food?” They answered that they had nothing because they had not even caught a single fish that they could cook for their breakfast. That was the thing that had happened to Peter the night before Jesus called him to become a fisher of men. Jesus just gave them one simple instruction. He said, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” In addition to speaking the words that had created the heavens and the earth, Jesus had also created everything else including the fish. As a result, Jesus showed the disciples that morning that He knew all things including the exact spot where they would find fish.

They obeyed Jesus and threw their net from the right side of the boat into the water. We see the results when we read verse 6, “So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.” Suddenly, their net was full of fish. Jesus showed the disciples that when they acted in obedience to Him, He could do far beyond what they could ask or even imagine. Paul expressed that thought well when he wrote in Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” The Lord can do great things when we focus on the glory of God instead of our own abilities.

Suddenly, John realized who had just spoken from the shore to them. John 21:7-11 says, “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.’ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.” John recognized that it had to be the Lord speaking from the shore and told the other disciples.

The disciples were given an example of the fact that the Lord can work in unexpected ways when we are obedient to Him. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Peter became very excited when he heard that it was Jesus. Peter had taken off his fisher’s coat as he worked because fishing is hard work and a fisherman can get very warm when he is pulling nets to the boat. He then put that outer garment back on and immediately jumped into the water to swim to shore. Here, we see that Peter was excited to hear that Jesus was there. Perhaps, he was reminded of the time when near this same place Jesus said in Mark 1:17, “Then Jesus said to

them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’” To know that Jesus had come to him at this place must have been a real encouragement to Peter.

Meanwhile, the other disciples were bringing the boat to the land. They did not have very far to come because they were only about three hundred feet from the shore. However, they had a very full net of fish that they had to drag and bring to the shore. When the disciples reached the shore, they saw that Jesus had a fire burning. There were already some fish being cooked by the fire. In addition, there was also some bread prepared and about ready for them to eat. The fish and the bread provided an immediate reminder of the time that Jesus had fed the five thousand with the lunch of a little boy. However, it probably also reminded the disciples of the teaching that Jesus had given the next day. Jesus had said in John 6:51, “‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.’” This was just two or three weeks after the time when Jesus had given His life for the world. As a result, the disciples had to think about both the physical bread and fish that perish and the spiritual bread this is eternal.

Jesus told the disciples to bring some of the fish that they had caught so that they could be put on the fire to provide them with more physical food once they had eaten the bread and fish that Jesus had prepared. Peter quickly acted in obedience to the Lord. He dragged the net to the land. The disciples saw that the net was full of large fish. They quickly counted the fish that were in the net and realized that Jesus had made it possible for them to catch one hundred and fifty-three fish at one time without the net breaking. Apparently, that was also a miracle for the type of net that they had used to catch the fish.

Jesus showed the disciples a principle that He had shown them many times during the years that they had followed Him. Jesus showed them that He was able to supply their needs in any situation when they were obedient to Him. Paul later wrote about this same principle in Philippians 4:19 where we read, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” The disciples needed to be reminded of this principle because it is a key to effective service for Jesus. As we are obedient to Him, He will supply our needs. Christ had earlier taught in Matthew 6:31-32, “‘Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.’” Jesus now showed this same lesson to the disciples again shortly before His return to heaven. We want to remind our physical and spiritual children of the same lesson by our example as we learn to trust the Lord to supply our needs in every situation. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to depend on the Lord to supply your needs.