

Dining With Jesus
Restoration for the Backslider
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Let us turn now in the Word of God to the gospel of John, John's gospel chapter 21. And as you turn to that passage of Scripture I would like, first of all, to bring greetings from our church in Port Hope or, as Dr. Paisley once called it when he was there, Port Pope. But we do bring greetings from our congregation there in Ontario.

I would like to thank Dr. Cairns for the invitation to minister the Word this morning. I would also like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Tim Farr for their great kindness to me in putting me up in their home. I have enjoyed being in their home very much and enjoyed the fellowship in the things of the Lord.

I have been blessed this week through the minister's week of prayer. We have certainly known the Lord's presence and his blessing and help as we sought his face at the throne of grace. I and the Reverend Fletcher start out first thing tomorrow morning and make the long trip back up north back into Canada.

I am sorry my wife was not able to be with us this week, but that was just through circumstances beyond our control, but we do bring greetings from my wife Doreen also.

I would like you to remember the work of the Lord in Port Hope. Our mother text for this year is from 2 Chronicles and chapter 15 and verse seven, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded."¹

And we believe the Lord keeps his Word and we are trusting in that Word for the days that lie ahead.

It was a joy for us to be here and we trust the Lord will meet with us in a very special way this morning.

The gospel of John chapter 21. We will commence our reading at the opening verse.

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon

¹ 2 Chronicles 15:7.

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. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 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. 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. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 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. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.²

Amen. We will end our reading at verse 14 with the earnest prayer that God will bless the public reading of his precious, inspired and infallible Word to our hearts this morning.

Before we consider God's Word today, let us unite our hearts briefly in a word of prayer. And let us pray over the Word. Pray that God will speak to our hearts today. What will be the benefit in coming to the house of the Lord and then to leave never having heard the voice of God. Let us pray to that end.

Our most loving Father and our gracious eternal God, we thank thee for the return of thy day. Lord, we bless thee that this sabbath morning finds us in the house of the Lord, living to praise thee. We thank thee, Lord, for this opportunity of coming to thy house to worship, to praise and to adore thy wonderful name. We bless thee, Lord, for this opportunity afforded to us, Lord, together in this meetinghouse around thy Word. And we ask thee now, Lord, that thou would speak to us from thy Word. Grant, dear Lord, that our experience will be that of those who gathered in the synagogue there in Nazareth when the minister handed the book to the Lord and, Lord, thou didst open the book and read from the book and expounded the book and the eyes of all the people, Lord, were fastened on thee. Dear Lord Jesus, this morning we would hand thee the book and, Lord, we ask thee that thou would open it to us today. Grant, Lord, that our eyes will not be fastened on man, but they will be fastened on the master. Yea, Lord, today our prayer is, "We would see Jesus." And for any dear soul this day in this place that knows not

² John 21:1-14.

Christ, Lord, may this be the day of their salvation? For any soul, Lord, that is out of touch with God, the backslidden and gone away into the far country, may this be the day that they shall return home?

Now, Lord, come and grant us the power of thy Spirit that we might be enabled to preach Christ and make much of his precious blood, for we ask all these things in our Savior's precious and peerless name. Amen.

I would like to leave with you this morning just three words from verse 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.”³

I would like to take those words of invitation extended to the disciples by the Lord Jesus when he said, “Come and dine.”⁴

The New Testament Scriptures records 12 appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection, 12 appearances unto his disciples and those who were also his followers. He appeared first of all unto Mary Magdalene out of whom he had cast seven devils. He then appeared unto the women that Lord's Day morning as they left the sepulcher. His third appearance was to the two disciples in the road to Emmaus. Then he revealed himself again, this time unto Peter in a very personal and private meeting with Peter. His fifth appearance was before his disciples when they were in that upper room, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews. He then returned the following Lord's Day which marked the sixth appearance of Christ after his resurrection and on that occasion he appeared to his disciples and, in particular, to Thomas.

That now brings us to his seventh appearance after his resurrection. And his seventh appearance is recorded here in John 21. For we read in the opening verse. “After these things Jesus shewed himself [or manifested himself] again to the disciples.”⁵

He manifested himself or he showed himself to seven of his disciples. There were seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. We might call them the seven disciples who were all at sea.

You know, when you talk about someone who is all at sea you are referring to one who is in a state of confusion, not really knowing what direction to take. In many ways the seven disciples were all at sea. They were at sea physically. They were at sea emotionally. And they were at sea spiritually. They were at sea emotionally because their denial of the Lord Jesus, their forsaking of their king, the memory of those things were very fresh in their minds. They were at sea spiritually because they had not been fully restored to the Lord and brought into fellowship and communion with him. And I can imagine what was going through the minds of those seven disciples.

³ John 21:12.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John 21:1.

Peter had denied his Lord with oaths and curses. The other disciples, when the shepherd had been taken, the disciples, the sheep had been scattered. They had all forsaken their Lord and master. And I am sure they wondered, “Will I ever walk with Christ again? Will I ever be involved in the work of Christ again? Can I possibly ever be one of his disciples again? After all I have done.”

It was just then that Jesus appeared and said to the seven disciples, “Come and dine.”⁶

Because it was when they went to that place where they dined with Christ that the seven disciples were fully restored to fellowship with the Lord and the Lord, again, commissioned Peter, “Feed my sheep. Yes, Peter, there is a work for you to do. Yes, Thomas. Yes, Nathaniel. The devil would tell you you are finished. The devil would tell you you are on the scrap heap. But I say, ‘Come and dine.’”

It was when they dined with Christ that they were restored.

I wonder are we addressing someone today in this meeting and you can identify with the seven disciples? Maybe in recent months or even over a period of years, you have got out of touch with the Lord. And the devil has told you you are finished. But while you would love to be again in fellowship with your master, well, there is a Word from the Lord for you today. You can be restored to fellowship and communion today with Christ because he says to you as he said to the seven disciples, “Come and dine.”

I trust you come and dine with Christ today.

Let us then, first of all, consider the seven upon the sea. Seven disciples are referred to here in verse two. Only three of them are named.

“There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee [James and John], and two other of his disciples.”⁷

Let us consider the seven disciples.

When the Lord appeared unto the seven we are told that they were at the Sea of Tiberias. John six verse one tells us Sea of Tiberias is the same as the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee, there you have the place. What is significant about this place where the Lord Jesus appeared unto the seven?

It is interesting, the name of the word Galilee means a circle. It was then at that same place the same Galilee over in Matthew four that the Lord Jesus had met these disciples

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John 21:2.

and called them from their fishing and said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”⁸

And now after three or more years of being the Lord’s disciples and walking with him and working with him and witnessing with him, where do we find them three years later? Back at the same place. Their lives had turned a complete circle. And they are right back where they started.

When the Lord first called them they were fishing. Now he appears unto them in John 21 and what are they doing? They are fishing again. Even though he had called them to fish for men, their lives had gone a complete circle.

How often do we feel that way? How often, as God’s people, do we feel at times that our lives are just going around in circles? You want to go on with God and you want to go through with God. Then we are often discouraged. We feel we are just right back where we started.

Is that how you feel today? Are you right back where you started? When the Lord first spoke to you, when the Lord first called you by his grace, when the Lord saved you, you know what you were doing. But you have got out of touch with the Lord and you are back in Galilee again. You have gone a complete circle.

There is a remedy. And the Lord can remedy that situation today because he invites you to come and dine.

There is something else about this place. It was there at the Sea of Tiberias, at the Sea of Galilee.

I would like you to turn, please, to Matthew 28. The 28th chapter of Matthew’s gospel. Now the Lord had told his disciples he would meet with them in Galilee. Matthew 28 here is the resurrection morning. We read in verse seven, here is a message from heaven through the angel for his disciples.

Verse seven. “And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.”⁹

Now look at verse 10. The women bring the message to the disciples.

“Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”¹⁰ The same message.

Notice it is the only message. The Lord is concerned about his disciples and each time the message is the same.

⁸ Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17.

⁹ Matthew 28:7.

¹⁰ Matthew 28:10.

“Tell my disciples I will be with them in Galilee and there they shall see me.”

But now I want you to look at verse 16.

“Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee.”¹¹

Where in Galilee?

“Into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.”¹²

The meeting place was not to be at the Sea of Tiberias. The appointed meeting place was to be in higher ground. They were to meet with the Lord on a mountain. But instead of being on higher ground with Christ, they were at the Sea of Tiberias without Christ.

Oh, they eventually got to higher ground, but it was after they went to that place and died with Christ.

Dear child of God this morning, it is the will of the Lord that you and I leave this world behind and with Jesus Christ get to higher ground. It was the place the Lord had appointed his disciples to meet with him. And you and I can get to higher ground today if we accept his invitation, “Come and dine.”

I tell you, when you dine with Christ, he will lead you to higher ground.

Notice not only the place, but the persons. We know the identity of five of these disciples: Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, namely James and John and two other unnamed disciples, two other. Sometimes we fall into that category.

We know that Simon Peter was out of touch with God. We know that John and James were out of touch with the Lord. We know that Nathanael were out of touch with the Lord. But who were the two others?

And the minister of the church knows those who are out of touch with the Lord, but then there are the others, unknown to the minister. The Lord knows and you know if you are not in fellowship with Christ the way you ought to be. You fall into that category of the others, unnamed.

Peter, James and John, those who went to make up the inner circle of the disciples, Peter, James and John who had seen great things wrought by the Lord that none of the other disciples witnessed. They were there with the Lord Jesus in the house of Jairus. They witnessed the Savior raising Jairus’ daughter to life. They had seen many other things wrought by the Lord. They had been at the mount of transfiguration with Christ. They had witnessed all these things. They were the privileged disciples.

¹¹ Matthew 28:16.

¹² Ibid.

And then Thomas. And Thomas had just a few days before fallen down at the Savior's feet and cried, out, "My Lord and my God,"¹³ when he saw the nail prints in his hands and the print of the sword in his side.

And Nathanael, "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile,"¹⁴ the Lord said. And Nathanael over in John one couldn't understand how this stranger of Galilee knew all about him.

And the Lord said, "Thou shalt see greater things than these."¹⁵ And he did, because chapter two begins with the marriage in Cana of Galilee and the disciples were there when the Lord turned the water into wine.

And who were the others? We don't know. But there is just one problem. Peter, James and John, yes, they had all these privileges. They had seen great things wrought by God. Thomas had made an open profession of his Lord. Nathanael had been promised he would see greater things than what he had already seen, but the problem was just that was all in the past.

Where were they that day? They had gone back to their old ways. They had gone back to the work that the Lord had called them from. And all the blessings and the privileges that they had experienced was all in the past. But what were they doing now?

I remember speaking to a man who professed to know the Lord. I never saw him at a prayer meeting. He wasn't a very regular attender at the house of the Lord. But whenever you get into a conversation with him, he would talk about the early days of the Free Church. He would talk about the battles and the blessings. He would talk about the demonstrations, the protests and he parades. And that was all he talked about.

The problem was he was living in the past. And that was all he had to talk about. He couldn't talk about anything that he was doing now.

Are you living in the past? Can you say this morning, "I remember those meetings, those prayer meetings that I attended. I remember those nights when the Lord came amongst us and blessed us and broke us. I remember the protests. I remember the open air. I remember doing this and I remember doing the other thing for God"?

Let me ask you. What are you doing now? Where are you now? Are you back at Galilee? You should be in the mountain.

The Lord Jesus would say this morning, "Come and dine."

¹³ John 20:28.

¹⁴ John 1:47.

¹⁵ John 1:50.

Then we notice the spontaneous decision. For we read in verse three, “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.”¹⁶

Simon Peter suggested going fishing. Notice the response of the others. The others said, “We also go with thee.”¹⁷

Peter returns to his former occupation of fishing, that which the Lord had called him from with the words, he said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”¹⁸

Now he was back to his old ways. The problem is he brought others with him.

“We also go with thee.”¹⁹

The backslider will soon find his way back to his old ways, but the problem is more often than not the backslider brings others with him. He has an influence on others. He influences them and they go back to the old ways and before we know it, that person has brought others with him.

How often has a backslider hindered the child of God from going forward with God?

Here: “Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.”²⁰

But it was to those same disciples the Lord Jesus came and said, “Come and dine.”

It says there that they entered into the ship immediately. They didn’t give any thought to the consequences.

It is interesting. Over in Matthew four when they were first called, when the Lord said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men,”²¹ it says they straight way or immediately followed him.

Here is the same word again. They never thought about the cost. They were happy to follow Christ in Matthew four. But now we find when Peter said, “I go a fishing,” the others went with him and they entered into a ship immediately. They never thought about the cost or the consequences of not going on with God.

Have you ever thought of the cost or the consequences of not going on with God?

¹⁶ John 21:3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17.

¹⁹ John 21:3.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Matthew 4:19.

And the Lord would say to you today, “Come and dine.”

And then we have the severe disappointment, for we read in verse three, “They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.”²²

Now let’s remember, these were experienced fishermen. Yet we read they labored all night and caught nothing because, you see, they didn’t have Christ in the vessel.

There are two words here which highlight their disappointment, night and nothing. The seven disciples were no longer walking in the light. They were no longer in close fellowship with their Savior. And everything was night about them. Just the misery that the backslider experiences. There is no joy. There is no happiness.

Oh, we seem to be living and laboring under a dark cloud. We don’t seem to walk in the sunshine of Christ’s love and it is always the darkness.

There is the night and there is the nothing. They caught nothing. And if you are a backslider today or one who is following the Lord afar off, I can guarantee today that you know and you may have experienced an awful emptiness in your life, an awful emptiness in your heart. The disciples came to shore and they had an empty ship and they had an empty net and they had empty hands and they had an empty heart.

You know what I am talking about.

There is an emptiness in your life, but the Lord says to you today, “Come and dine.”

And then we notice, secondly, the stranger on the shore for we read in verse four, “But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.”²³

After a night of laboring and catching nothing.

“But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore.”²⁴

Here we have the dawn.

And after a night of nothing I am sure the disciples were glad to see the dawn because for these disciples the dawn marked a new day. It was the commencement of a new day, the beginning of a new day.

The dawn not only marked the end of a terrible night, it heralded the dawn that would become a glorious day. It is no coincidence that we read, “But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore.”²⁵

²² John 21:3.

²³ John 21:4.

²⁴ Ibid.

For, you see, he is the Son of Righteousness who has arisen with healing in his wings. And that day at the Sea of Tiberias Jesus Christ, the Son of Righteousness, arisen with healing in his wings and he was going to heal the wounds that those disciples had after forsaking their Lord and Peter denying his Lord. And that day was the beginning of great things for those disciples.

My dear Christian friend, today if you were to come and dine with Jesus Christ, if you were to accept his invitation, if you this day were to come and sit down with him and commune with him and fellowship with him and talk with him, this would be the dawn of a new day in your life. For months, for years you have been walking in the darkness. There has been an emptiness. There has been a void in your heart. This can be the dawn of a new day. And all those things are put behind you. And today you can be restored to Jesus Christ. He will forgive your backsliding. He will love you freely. Will you not come and dine with him?

Then we notice the blindness of the disciples. And though they had walked with the Lord for over three years, yet that morning they didn't recognize him. He was a stranger on the shore. They didn't know him.

And we say, "Well, this is most surprising. Why did they not know him?"

It was the same Jesus. For the first verse tells us that he showed himself. It wasn't anybody else. It was the same Jesus they had seen perform the miracle of feeding the 5000, the same Jesus that raised up Jairus' daughter, the same Jesus that had touched the lepers, healed the blind and raised the dead, the same Christ. Yet they didn't recognize him.

But then, you see, whenever the soul gets out of touch with the Lord, that soul no longer has eyes for Christ. That soul has eyes for other things. The disciples had eyes only for their fishing and they didn't recognize the one who had called them from the fishing, the one who said, "Follow me."

My friend, today turn your eyes on Jesus. Look this very day full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and his grace.

Oh, I trust today that you will see the Lord and that in grace the Lord shows himself to you.

Notice something else. Not only the dawn, but notice how dumb the disciples were.

Verse five. "Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No."²⁶

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ John 21:5.

That was all they had to say, such a little word, two letters, no. That was the height of it.

They hadn't much to say. Notice the challenge.

“Children have ye any meat? They answered him, No.”²⁷

Suddenly their master had appeared on the shore. And he wanted to know had they any meat, had they anything to set before him and all they could say was, “No.”

I am reminded of the man that we read about in Luke 11. The Lord Jesus told the story. He said in verse five, Luke 11:

Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?²⁸

Look at what he said.

He said, “A friend of mine...”²⁹

I am sure you would describe Jesus Christ as a friend of yours. But one day that friend of yours will come. Will you have anything to set before him? If he suddenly comes and calls you home, will you stand before him in glory empty handed? When he challenges you, “Do you have any meat?” What will you say?

No.

Do you stand before him bearing nothing but leaves? Would you deny that friend of yours meat and labor and work and service?

Someone asked me once, “What does it mean when the Scriptures tell us of the saints when they get to heaven that the Lord shall wipe away all tears from their eyes?”

I gave them my opinion. Maybe Dr. Cairns will tell me otherwise. But I said I felt that whenever I stand before the Lord and I see him who is altogether lovely, and I see him whose visage for my sake was marred more than any man's and I see the nail prints, I will wish I had given him more and I believe that will open the fountain of tears. For by and by when I look on his face, the beautiful face, his wonderful face, by and by when I look on his face I will wish, oh how I'll wish I had given more.

But to stand before him with nothing, [?].

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Luke 11:5-6.

²⁹ Luke 11:6.

Not only do we have the challenge, we have the children. Notice how tenderly the Lord dealt with the disciples. He said, “Children have ye any meat?”³⁰

Children. He didn’t come down upon them with words of judgment and condemnation. But he spoke with compassion and love. He said, “Children, have ye any meat?”³¹

And, dear backslider, today there is hope for you. There is hope for you while God is a God of love, while God is a God of mercy and heirs of the tender heart. There is hope for you.

And the same God says to you today, “Come and dine.”

There is another thought here. Because when the Lord appeared on the shore to the disciples and he said to them, “Children have you any meat? They answered him, No.”³²

They were still his children.

Oh, the fellowship had been marred. But the relationship remained intact. And it always will.

I have four sons. During the years of their growing up and development, oh, they did things that grieved me. And for a while the fellowship was marred. It didn’t matter what they did. They were still my sons, my children.

When the disciples had forsaken the Lord, Peter had denied the Lord and they had gone back to their fishing, but they were still his friends.

My friend, today you have got out of touch with God. You are still his child. And to you he says, “Come and dine.”

Notice the condemnation. The Lord did not condemn them as we have said for their actions and their answer did. When the Lord challenged them he said, “Children have you any meat?”³³

They had very little to say. They just answered him no. That one word condemned them.

The Lord might say to us today, “Children, have you any meat?” Maybe we just say no, nothing, Lord.

Have you been seeking the lost? No.

Have you been laboring for eternity? No.

³⁰ John 21:5.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Have you left your all on the altar? No.

Have you laid up treasure in heaven? No.

That word condemns us. But Jesus says, “Come and dine.”

Notice then the directive. Here the disciples took advice from a, as far as they were concerned, a total stranger.

“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.”³⁴

What was the directive? They had been through a night of fishing, caught nothing. They had used all their experience and caught nothing. They had used all the skill at their disposal and caught nothing. And the stranger said, “Cast your net on the right side of the ship.”³⁵

What had happened? They had put the Lord in charge. They had labored all night and caught nothing because the Lord was not in charge. They were leaning upon their own understanding. But once they had put the Lord in charge, they could hardly drag the net in for the multitude of fishes.

My friend, you know today in your own heart and before God the Lord hasn't been in charge of your life for a long time. That is why your nets are empty. That is why you are still at Galilee. That is why your heart is empty.

Come and dine today. Put Christ in charge. Put him in his rightful place.

Notice the largeness of the catch.

The Lord told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find. See, there is always a right side. Without the Lord Jesus they had obviously been fishing on the wrong side.

Whenever you are in fellowship with Christ he will always lead you to the right side.

But notice something here. We are told that the Lord said to the disciples, “And ye shall find.”³⁶

So this was not just a fishing trip of chance. Many you will find. Let's try the other side of the ship.

³⁴ John 21:6.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

No, the Lord guaranteed a catch. “Ye shall find.”

And now when you take the Lord at his Word, he will guarantee a find. Isn't that what he said to the disciples in Matthew four? Follow me and I will make you fishers of men? You will catch men. You will see souls saved. You follow me and I am in charge.

But the disciples had labored all night. Nighttime was the regular, proper time to fish. We know that also from Luke five and verse five, a similar incident. They had labored all night, caught nothing. Here they are again. Labored all night, caught nothing.

The Lord didn't say “Well, men, we had better wait until the next night.”

No, the Lord told the disciples to start fishing immediately. As far as they were concerned it was the wrong time to fish. In the early morning, no. It had to be done at night.

And what happened? They had a great draught of fishes.

See, whenever Christ is in charge of your life it doesn't matter what the odds are, Christ is the sovereign Lord. And, no, the odds may be against you as far as you are concerned, but not where Christ is control.

And that tells me something. It tells me that my sovereign Lord is able to restore unto you the years the locusts have eaten. That is something which is impossible with man. Restore unto you the years the locusts have eaten. How can he do it? Just the way he filled the net with fishes at the wrong time for fishing. How can he do it? He can do it because he is God. And all those wasted years [?]. He will restore them unto thee today if you come and dine.

Notice the discovery. When the miracle was wrought, in an instant the eyes of the disciples were opened, verse seven.

“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.”³⁷

You have the recognition of the Lord by John. He said, “It is the Lord.”

How come John recognized him? I believe John recognized the Lord because of a demonstration of his power, but something else. If you read the gospels you will discover that at the beginning of their discipleship the Lord called them four times. And over in Matthew four we are told that they immediately left their nets. Their final, the last call, the fourth call is recorded in Luke chapter five. A similar incident, they labored all night, caught nothing. They had a great draught of fishes, but there is something different in Luke five.

³⁷ John 21:7.

Whereas in Matthew four it says they left their nets, they left their ship, they left their father. But in Luke five it says they forsook all. They forsook all, never to return to their ship or their nets until now. And surely John remembered that and remembered where he had forsaken all and here he is back at the very place the Lord had called him from.

You remember that day, don't you? You remember the place, perhaps, where the Lord saved you. Remember where the Lord spoke to you and called you to serve him. Oh, I am not talking about full time ministry, but perhaps in the church or somewhere else and you remember how you said, "Lord, I will forsake all, for I am thine."

Notice what it says there in that verse seven.

"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord."³⁸

That disciple whom Jesus loved, that phrase, of course, refers to John. Five times in his gospel he uses that phrase to speak of himself. Five times, that disciple whom Jesus loved.

Five is the number of grace in Scripture. And after all John had done and followed the Lord afar off, had forsaken the Lord, had gone back to the fishing, he still describes himself as that disciple whom Jesus loved. Christ still loved him. Here is grace.

And, dear Christian, today Christ still loves you.

That is why we sang this morning, "Marvelous, matchless, infinite grace, grace that covers all my sin."

And Christ still loved John.

The reaction of Peter when he saw Christ and the power of Christ? He saw his own shame and his own sin.

It is only when we see Christ that we see ourselves the way we are. And finally and quickly you have the Savior upon the sand.

Verse nine." As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread."³⁹

There you have the preparation.

The Lord was not going to say to the disciples, "Come and dine," and then have nothing for them. What did they need most of all? They labored all night, caught nothing. They were cold, they were hungry. And the Lord provided a fire and food.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ John 21:9.

Where did the fire and the food come from? Where did the fish and the bread and the fire come from?

I don't know. I certainly believe the Lord could have created it there and then. But wherever it came from it remains a mystery.

Dear Christian, when was the last time you fed your soul on the mysteries of God, the mystery of redemption, the mystery of creation, the mystery of election, the mystery of salvation. All these things we cannot fully understand their [?] and their depths. But we believe them. And how they feed the soul.

You have been feeding yourselves on the husks of the world. Jesus says, "Come and dine."

Feed your soul on the mysteries of God.

And the invitation, the Lord said to them seven, "Come and dine," the words actually mean come and break fast. They had been starving for hours. Come and break your fast. Because you have been out of touch with God. You have been starving spiritually. Come and break your fast. Come and dine.

And the manifestation.

Verse 12 we read, "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord."⁴⁰

The manifestation.

And then it says in verse 14, "This is the third time Christ showed himself unto his disciples,"⁴¹ twice in the upper room and here at the Sea of Tiberias. It was on the third occasion that they were restored to fellowship.

How many times has the Lord spoken to you? More than three. But he is here today.

And he says to you, "Come and dine."

Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Our most gracious loving God and eternal Father, we rejoice that there is grace and mercy with the Lord. And we thank thee, Lord, thou indeed art able to restore unto us the years the locusts have eaten. Thou art able to do, Lord, that which we cannot do. And, our Father, we pray for any dear child of God here today. And, oh Lord, as thy Word has gone forth, thou hast challenged them and they have had nothing to say. Oh Lord, by thy

⁴⁰ John 21:12.

⁴¹ John 21:14.

grace may they come and dine? May they sit down with thee? May they receive the heavenly fire and the heavenly fruit? And may this day mark a dawn of a new beginning in their life? Oh, God, answer prayer. Bless this church and Dr. Cairns and the associate ministers. May even greater things be done here in the days to come and we will give thee all the praise and the glory. Amen.