

## WHEN JESUS DROPS IN JOHN 21:1-14

After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, **and in this way He showed Himself:** Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee (that is, James and John), and two others of His disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing.

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.

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 (which would've been 300 feet, or about the length of an American football field)), 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. Jesus said to them, 'Come and eat breakfast.'

Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" - knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

*Have you ever been photobombed?* You aimed your camera to take a snapshot, and somehow something or someone unintended appeared in your photograph.

Perhaps you and your sweetie were posing on the beach when somehow that fat, ugly guy spoiled your special remembrance. Or maybe it happened at an important event - a wedding proposal or even the wedding itself. It could've occurred randomly, or it might've been planned by a mischievous friend.

A photo-bomber pops in on scenes where he or she is unexpected. The bomber enjoys surprising folks by interjecting himself in someone else's photo field. And **the risen Christ was the very first photo-bomber!**

For a short stint of time - 40 days to be exact - Jesus kept popping in - photobombing His disciples. *And these unplanned appearances were intended to make a point... our Savior rose from the dead that first Easter, and lives to be Lord of our lives! Even today, the risen Christ loves to photo-bomb His followers.*

Acts 1:3 says of Jesus, "To (His apostles) He presented himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days."

For over a month, Jesus' sudden and surprising drop-ins vaporized any doubt of His resurrection in the minds of His followers. Acts refers to His appearances as "*infallible proofs.*" The disciples saw Him walk and heard Him talk. They could check out His scars...

There was no denying it, Jesus was alive! *His photo-bombing* filled His disciples with faith, and utterly convinced them that life with Jesus would continue!

And here in John 21 the Lord drops in once more! John begins in verse 1, "*After these things Jesus showed himself again...*" Then he adds, "*and in this way He showed himself...*" *This is intriguing language.*

It's as if John is suggesting that this particular episode is a grid for understanding all of His post-resurrection appearances. The risen Christ followed a pattern... John is saying, here's how Jesus *comes and goes*, how He works *here and there* - how He does *this and that* - why He'll appear *at anytime and in anyplace.*

In Matthew 28:20, just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised His disciples, "*And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" There is a sense in which Jesus is always with us. In the person of the Holy Spirit, He lives in our spirit, and empowers us to do God's will. Jesus lives His life through us.

But there is another sense in which the risen Christ is still dropping in! He promises us in Matthew 18:20, "*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*" Throughout the book of Acts there're occasions where Jesus reveals Himself in a special manner and performs extraordinary works.

All Christians know from experience there are moments and places where the presence and power of the risen Lord is *expressly sensed* and *tangibly felt.*

I believe John 21 is a blueprint to help us recognize the risen Lord's appearances in our lives, and how to cooperate with His intentions... This morning, I'd like to divide my comments under four headings...

First, *where Jesus shows up.*

Second, *when Jesus shows up.*

Third, *how Jesus shows up.*

And fourth, **why Jesus shows up.**

For I'm convinced the risen Christ wants to drop in on you! The Savior wants to show up in your life! Yet we need to know *where, when, how,* and *why* to look...

First, notice **where Jesus shows up.** Here in John 21 He engages His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, but the point is Jesus can show up **anywhere.**

Notice, Jesus isn't appearing here in a synagogue, or at a religious shrine, or even on the Temple Mount. Rather He reveals Himself in a very regular, and ordinary, and nondescript spot - on the bank of a lake. *And to guys doing something as humdrum as fishing.*

When you survey the dozen or so post-resurrection appearances of Jesus you'll discover that all of them, without exception, occur in common, everyday places.

His appearances made the *occasions special*, but He never revealed Himself on a *special occasion*. When Jesus appeared to His disciples it was always to interrupt the mundane, and routine, and daily of life.

Think back to the events of that first Easter - and the appearances of the risen Christ... What's so special about *two dejected disciples walking down a beaten path from Jerusalem to Emmaus* - Or *ten frightened men cloistered away in an upper room* - Or *a woman weeping in a garden* - Or here in our text, *a handful of fishermen working their favorite bed on the lake?*

Today, when you go to the place on the shoreline where it's believed these events occurred, you find a little garden and chapel known as "**The Church of the Primacy.**" The site has been transformed into a sacred spot - holy ground - a stopover for holy land pilgrims.

**But in Jesus' day it was just a spot.** There was nothing religious, or special, or sacred, or holy about the place. It was just a plain, unmarked beach on the northern bank of the lake. Call it "**a bore on the shore.**"

In essence, for these "*disciples gone fishing,*" Jesus appeared to them at work - for fishing was their trade. This would be the equivalent of the risen Christ appearing to you tomorrow at the office, or in the break room, or on the assembly line, or on the Marta Train.

We expect Jesus to show up at church, yet His post-resurrection appearances all occurred in secular settings. Jesus was always dropping in on everyday life, in run-of-the-mill places. *He invaded the daily.*

I'll never forget the night Jesus met me in a saving way. It didn't happen for me in a church building. *(At that time in my life, I was pretty turned off to church).* But I was

learning about Jesus... I had concluded He was Lord, and I needed to surrender *my life to His will*.

And so on a summer night in 1978, I rolled my car into a gravel parking lot and knelt down at a concrete picnic table. There was no stained glass, no praise band, no pastor on duty... *but Jesus showed up!* The living Lord forgave me generously of my many sins, took over my life, *and I've never been the same since*.

If the only time you look for Jesus is on Sunday mornings in a house of worship no wonder you miss Him! *Open your eyes, my friend. He's out and about!*

You're liable to find Jesus at the ball park, or on the roadside, or in the movie theater, or hanging out in the backyard, or cruising with you in the car, or at your neighbor's house. **Not just the sacred, but the secular is His domain.** Scripture says the Earth is His footstool.

While I was enrolled at the CCBC in California, one weekend we drove to Las Vegas to spend a few days witnessing on the streets. It was an exciting adventure. We talked to scores of people - *a few were even sober*.

I had a roommate who was broke financially. Lee was down to his last quarter. He wasn't sure how he was getting home. We were in Caesar's Palace when I saw Lee stick his last quarter into a slot machine. He actually laid hands on the machine. And I'll never forget his prayer, "**Lord, I know this is a den of greed and wickedness, but I also know you are above all and can use whatever means you choose to bless your people. I ask You, Lord, to take my quarter and multiply it.**"

Then Lee pulled the lever on that one-armed bandit, and the window read - *not lemon, lemon, lemon, or apple, apple, apple, but amazingly, 7, 7, 7*. That's when 200 quarters, 50 dollars worth, tumbled out of that machine. And you should've seen the look on the lady's face sitting at the slot machine next to him! She almost fell off her stool! I wouldn't be surprised if she's not still there, 40 years later, praying over that slot.

Understand, I don't believe God manipulates slot machines on a regular basis and advocates gambling, but He used that incident to show me He's far bigger than the box I had Him in. The living, loving Jesus can work *anywhere* at *anytime* - in *any way* for *anyone* He chooses! **Where does Jesus show up? Anywhere!**

**But when does Jesus show up?** And the answer is, "**When you least expect Him, but when you most need Him.**" Notice the disciples are on the water, busily working their nets. It's Jesus on the shore, but they don't know it's Him. *Perhaps it's still dark... Or maybe they're too far from shore to distinguish His features... Or it could be they just didn't expect to see Him there...*

Hey, Jesus wants to reveal Himself to us, but often, we don't recognize Him either. It's been suggested the reason the Holy Spirit names only five of the seven fishermen in the boat is so you and I can take our seat as the unnamed two. All too often, the reason we don't recognize Jesus is because we're not expecting Him.

It reminds me of the church Easter pageant where the director was casting the roles. One little boy insisted on being the rock in front of the Garden Tomb.

The director asked him, "Don't you want a speaking part?" The boy was adamant, "*I want to be the rock.*"

After the play, the director was still curious about the little guy's choice of roles. She asked him, "Why did you want to play the rock?" The boy smiled and said, "*Oh, it felt so good to be the first to see Jesus alive!*" And this is the meaning of Easter. The stone was rolled away. And just like that stone until you've been **moved** by the risen Christ you haven't experienced Easter!

Jesus is alive and well, whether or not you *believe in Him*, or are *effected by Him*... But the stone was rolled off the mouth of the tomb by the risen Christ - and the truth of the resurrection ought to move us as well. **Jesus' resurrection is what should get our faith rolling!**

Understand the living Lord wants to reveal Himself to you. I believe He drops in on us far more than we realize, but we don't see Him if we're not looking...

And one of the biggest causes of our blindness is our own self-sufficiency. We don't look for Jesus because we've learned to *get along* and *do fine* without Him.

Remember, Peter was a fisherman by profession. He had bumbled and stumbled as a disciple - but he knew fishing. Here he's falling back on a former confidence. That is, *until Jesus strips him of his self-assurance*.

Here, the Lord orchestrates a little divinely-inspired emptiness. Notice, we're told at the end of verse 3, "**they caught nothing.**" Peter and the professionals had fished all *night* without a *bite*. Their fishing was a flop.

It's interesting, God sets up the disciples for a divine visitation by allowing them to labor all night in vain. They burn up their energies - end up exhausted. It's a season of failure that primes them for an appearance.

Realize, nothing clouds our spiritual vision like our own successes. It's hard to see Jesus when our nets are full - *when we think we've got it all under control*.

You're less likely to see the risen Lord when it's all about you. That's why Jesus lets the disciples try their hand at fishing... **then sees to it their nets are empty!**

**When does Jesus show up? When you least expect Him, but when you most need Him.** We'll see Jesus when we're most aware of our need for Him!

But the next question is **how does Jesus show up?** And the answer here is *in a series of subtleties*.

The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus weren't announced by angelic trumpeters or by handwriting in the sky. There were no cracks of thunder and blinding lights. Jesus liked the subdued and subtle appearance.

Here no one thing tips off the disciples that the Man on the shore is Jesus. It dawns on them gradually. The truth hits them only after a sequence of perceptions...

Notice Jesus' first words to them, **"Children, have you any food?"** This is the question all fishermen get asked. In essence, **"Hey, you guys caught anything?"** And the dejected disciples answered back, **"Nothing."**

Notice too, when Jesus addresses His disciples from the shore He uses the word, **"Children."** One commentator translates the Greek word as **"lads."**

Jesus refers to His disciples with a phrase that denotes affection, intimacy, and caring. *This was the first in this string of subtleties.* His greeting reflected His love... As did His first words to them in the upper room, at His initial appearance following His resurrection. Jesus greeted them, **"peace to you."**

I'm afraid some of us don't look for Jesus to appear for fear of His wrath. We think He's angry at us. If He finds us He'll judge us. Rather than look for the risen Christ, we've failed Him so often we're really trying to duck Him. *But trust me, you have nothing to fear!*

Jesus loves you despite your sin. If you're a believer He's already forgiven you. He wants you to experience the peace that a renewed awareness of His presence brings. These disciples were wayward kids - prodigal sons - yet Jesus isn't ashamed to call them His **"lads."**

And this must've got them thinking... It was the first subtlety that pointed to Jesus. Perhaps they began to wonder - maybe they even asked each other - **"Isn't it odd for a stranger to call us "friends" and show a concern over whether we've got anything to eat?"**

Well, the second subtlety was Jesus' instructions, **"cast the net on the right side of the boat."** Though it didn't register at first, the disciples had heard this before! In Luke 5 when Jesus first called Peter and his pals to follow Him it was after a similar episode. They'd been fishing all night and had returned to shore empty-handed. That's when Jesus told Peter to row back out, throw in his nets... *and they took in a miracle catch!*

In a subtle way, here Jesus is reminding His followers of the first time they realized He was the Son of God. Now 3½ years later, Jesus is re-enlisting them into His

service, so He primes the pump with similar circumstances. He stirs up the beginnings of their faith.

When God brings His former works to mind, it's often His way of preparing us for a new and future work. God isn't sentimental! He's not into reminiscing just for old times sake. When God recalls a past victory or lesson He's preparing us for lessons and victories still ahead.

As these fishermen are laughing, and celebrating, and dragging in their stretching nets, it suddenly hits John. The string of subtleties come together. The tumblers fall into place: *the name "children," His caring, the circumstances, now the catch... this is Jesus!* And as soon as it hits him, John shouts... *"It's the Lord."*

*And I love that line!* What an incredible experience it is when you suddenly recognize God's purpose behind the circumstances. You weren't expecting it - you didn't see it coming - but a miracle sneaked up behind you, and slapped its hands over your eyes, and said, *"Guess who?"* By then you know... *"It's the Lord."*

There's an expression among Christians that sums up these experiences. When Jesus surprises us, when the subtleties mount up, when you conclude, *"It's the Lord"* - someone will usually say, *"That's a God thing."*

And that's John's reaction here! When it dawns on him the Man on the beach is Jesus - John is the first person to shout, *"It's a God thing" - "It's the Lord!"*

And notice John is the first of the disciples to recognize it's Jesus. Several times in His Gospel John refers to himself, but never by his given name. John uses the pen name, *"the disciple whom Jesus loved."*

And this points to a profound connection. Apparently, the disciple that cultivated the most intimate relationship with Jesus was the first to recognize Him.

Recall, John was the disciple that leaned on Jesus at the Last Supper... At the cross Jesus committed the care of His mother, Mary, over to John... Jesus loved and trusted John. I believe Jesus loved John so dearly, *because His love was so quickly returned by John.*

And understand the pattern. *The people who love Jesus most are usually the first to sense His presence.*

I'm convinced Jesus is constantly dropping in, but if you want to be quick to recognize Him; then you need to cultivate a personal and spiritual intimacy with Him.

It's when I spend time with Him, and read His Word, and pray, and let His Spirit stir up my passions and enlighten my understanding - then I'll be quick to see *"It's the Lord."* I'll be first to recognize the subtleties.

Well, so far, we've answered three questions...

**Where does Jesus show up? Anywhere.**

**When does Jesus show up? When we least expect Him, but when we need Him most.**

**How does Jesus show up? In a series of subtleties**

But here's our final question, **why does Jesus show up?** And there are two ways to answer this question...

We could put it, **Jesus drops in on us to turn our ship around...** This is what happened to the disciples. They were busy with the business of fishing, until it dawned on them the stranger on the shore was Jesus. That's when they immediately steered their ship in His direction. *They turned their little boat about face.*

In fact, Peter couldn't even wait to turn the boat around. When he knew it was the Lord he left the boat behind, dove into the lake, and swam for the shore.

You've got to love Peter's enthusiasm. Read verse 7 again, **"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."** *And why would you put on your coat, in order to then jump into the water?*

Obviously, Peter's only thought was **"I got to get to Jesus"** This is what happens whenever you recognize **"it's the Lord."** Jesus eclipses all your other concerns!

Realize when Jesus shows up it creates a shift in direction. *When the Lord crosses your path, your path will get altered.* Jesus comes with new bearings, and a new course. Jesus takes over the steering in your life.

A second way to put it, would be that when Jesus drops in it creates **a transformational moment.** Life doesn't remain the same after Jesus comes on the scene. He's not concerned with endorsing the status quo. Jesus rocks the boat. He comes to do a new work. Jesus always wants to make *big changes* in us.

When the disciples get to shore they find *a fire of coals and broiling fish* - but this wasn't a typical fish fry.

Here's where the Greek words translated **"coals"** and **"fish"** come in handy... **"Coals"** is **"anthrakia,"** the same word used for the fire of coals Peter huddled over several weeks earlier on that fateful night when three times he denied his Lord, and then the rooster crowed.

And the word for **"fish"** is **"opsarion."** The word John used to describe the two fish with which Jesus fed the 5000. Remember, it was immediately after that miracle that Peter recommitted himself to Jesus. The Lord had asked the disciples if they were



going to leave Him, as the multitudes did - but Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

The point is when the risen Christ dropped in on Peter, *He dropped right into His heart*. **With the coals** He took Peter back to the night of his defeat. **With the fish** He reminded him of his commitment to still follow.

And when Jesus appears to us truth comes out in the open. Motives are revealed. Skeletons topple from the closet. Smokescreens dissipate. The real issues surface. When Jesus drops in, it forces us to face the truth about ourselves. Jesus can't turn our ship around until we recognize we're headed in the wrong direction.

I had a friend who use to drop-in unannounced. Early in our marriage he'd drop by the house and surprise us with a visit. This guy would show up, knock on the door, and if the door was unlocked he'd just walk on in. Well, with *my newlywed wife's gentle coaxing* I explained to him that was no longer proper protocol.

But realize this is exactly how Jesus rolls! The risen Christ has no qualms about dropping in unannounced. He comes *when we least expect Him, but most need Him*. Jesus loves us and wants to turn our ship around.

In verse 12 Jesus invites His disciples, "Come and eat breakfast." It's striking to me that Jesus invited His disciples to "*breakfast*" - *the first meal of a new day*.

And take note, this whole episode happened early in the morning. In fact, most of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances occurred in the morning hours. Jesus' first drop-in the Sunday He was resurrected, was to Mary, outside the tomb, **at dawn** - at the break of day.

Here in John 21 all this *dawns* on the disciples at *dawn*... **When Jesus drops in, it's a brand new day.**

Recall, how we divide history - **there's BC and AD.**

"B.C." stands for "Before Christ." Of course, **BC** is also the name of a powder that relieves headaches. And to me that's very fitting, for my life **before Christ - the BC days** - were just that - one, big headache!

"A.D." though is a Latin abbreviation. "Anno Domini." It means "Year of our Lord." It was Jesus' resurrection that marked a new era, a new day for humanity! All time is now influenced and dominated by Jesus Christ.

Whether you're 13, or 43, or 83 when the risen Christ drops into your life it marks the beginning of a brand new life. **Jesus invites us to breakfast, not nightcaps.**

And notice again in verse 12, Jesus says, "**Come.**" Author John Phillips writes, "**Come! It is the grandest word in the Gospel. It dissolves distance. It brings saint and**

sinner alike to Him who takes away sin and sadness and replaces them with joy and gladness.”

Before Jesus’ death and resurrection none of us were invited to “**come.**” Our sin separated us from God. In fact, in the OT when God revealed Himself to Israel on Mount Sinai they roped off the mountain so no one would wander too close. Imagine, God was “**off limits.**”

*But no longer!* Jesus has ended that separation. What Jesus did on the cross, caused God to bury the hatchet. God is no longer angry with man over his sin. Jesus paid the price, and won God’s forgiveness. Now He invites everyone to come to His table and eat of His portion. There is a smorgasbord of grace at His table.

And today, just as He did on the shore that morning long ago, Jesus invites whosoever will to “**come.**” This one marvelous word *ends our imposed separation.* We have been invited by the risen Christ to “**come**” to Him!

If you’re not a Christian, here’s Jesus word to you, “**Come...**” *Come to Him. He’ll wash away your sins!*

And if you are a Christian, yes, Jesus is always with you. But He also wants to make His presence known to you in a personal way. *He wants to drop in on you!*

Everyone of us needs to expect Jesus to photobomb our lives. The risen Christ loves to drop in on us. That’s why we need to ready our hearts - so when He does, well be quick to recognize Him, and say, “**It’s the Lord!**”