

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples: A Guided Meditation

From the Gospel of John ([John 21:1-13](#), NSRV)

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Preparing to Pray

Find a comfortable place without distractions. You may wish to light a candle, and perhaps some quiet ambient music if that is helpful to your prayer. Draw your attention to your body. As you breathe deeply, feel the air flow from head to toe. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you inhale and to open the eyes and ears of your heart as you exhale.

Slowly read the scripture passage. Gently notice if a word or phrase or reaction comes to mind. Take a moment to savor that awareness before moving on. Notice, too, any stray thoughts, then let them go for now.

Read the passage again. Situate this moment in the bigger gospel picture. Remember what has gone before in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that brought these disciples to this fishing expedition.

Ask for the grace we are seeking: to rejoice and be glad intensely at such great glory and joy of Jesus.

Bring the Scene to Life:

Set the scripture aside to let your imagination flow. Use what follows as it is helpful to you. Allow the setting to unfold as you imagine what people say and do. Use all your senses to immerse yourself in the surroundings. See their faces and expressions. Hear the different voices and sounds. Feel the temperature on your face, Notice what you smell, and what your fingers touch. Add your own details as the Spirit leads.

Having been together from the start, and after everything the disciples had been through together, things didn't turn out the way they had expected. At the start of a new day after a long and unproductive night fishing, they were feeling cold and tired. It seemed like the heart had gone out of the group and their hope with it. A light breeze pushed the sailboat slowly back to shore.

Slumped in the hull, leaning against empty nets, Peter was brooding. With a bit of self-pity thought, 'I'm not even good at doing what I used to be good at and enjoyed'.

The Sons of Thunder in the stern remained silent. One with a hand on the tiller, the other absently trims the sail.

On the left side of the boat Thomas' hand dragged through the water. Arguing with himself, he did not fully trust his recent experience in the upper room but wanted to.

On the right Philip and Nathaniel were quietly making their way down the path of ‘remember when...’ Toward the bow Andrew and one of other disciples were once more telling the Beloved One about when it all started (was it only three years ago?) with the Baptist pointing out Jesus to them, and how they became friends and followers.

Half-listening, eyes on the shore, the Beloved One spotted smoke rising, swirling in the first rays of dawn. Thinking, ‘Where there’s smoke?’ Sure enough, there was the flickering light of a small fire, a man’s silhouette standing next to it. He called out to them, ‘what, no fish?’

Conversations stopped. Heads lifted, turned to see who had spoken. Peter struggled to his feet. ‘Give it one more try,’ said the man. Blinking a few times to make sure of what he had seen, the Beloved One slipped over to Peter, looking him in the eye. ‘It is the Lord!’

As they drew nearer to shore, bright reflections danced on Jesus’ tunic, emanating affection, amplifying the warmth of the rising sun. The smell of smoke, roasting fish, and toasted bread drifted across the water to them.

Peter hurried to put on clothes, jumped in, and made for shore while the rest hauled in the straining net of fish. The Sons of Thunder began to rumble directions, dropping and stowing the sail while Nathaniel and the Beloved One secured the catch. Andrew, Philip, and the other disciple drop down with light splashes to ease the boat the final few yards to shore.

Peter paused, shaking water from his hair as he wiped his face. Breathing fast, heart pounding, waves lapped around his feet, sinking him a bit into the sand.

Jesus, still smiling, asked for some of the fresh fish. Peter, perhaps feeling he had something to prove, scrambled back to the boat, grabbed not just a few fish but the whole catch, and hauled it to shore. Everyone was hanging back in awe. Jesus laughed, waved them forward, and invited them to eat.

As the saying goes, ‘third time’s the charm’. Shoulders relaxed. The sun was well above the horizon now, dissolving the remaining chill. Eyes sparkled like the water as grins grew into broad smiles. Hearts stirred with gladness when he placed warm bread and fish in their cold weathered hands. The disciples no longer needed to ask. They knew it was the Lord.

What’s Your Story?

- Where are you in this scene? Who are you drawn to?
- When have you been like Peter, with others looking to you for leadership, and you with no idea what the best next step is?
- When have you been like Zebedee’s sons, so confident in their desire to follow Jesus no matter what, but absent when you couldn’t rise to the occasion?
- What’s your story of coming to know Jesus? Have you been friends for a long time, or found friendship more recently?
- What are your own Beloved One moments, able to see and point out Jesus to someone dear to you when they thought all hope was gone?

Imagine drawing up a camp chair to join the group while you explore your own memories of loss and change, of missed expectations, of unexpected delight, someone pointing you to Jesus’ love for you.

Some people find it helpful to journal as your prayer unfolds. Others find it more helpful to take a walk, or find another place to be immersed in the scene.

However you proceed, take a few minutes at the end to savor the imaginations, memories, and insights during prayer when you feel consoled, and that leads you to rejoice and be glad with Jesus as he enjoys his resurrection.