

TEXT: John 21:1-14

THEME: THE RISEN LORD APPEARS

1. The Risen Lord Appears to His Disciples
2. The Risen Lord Appears in Daily Tasks

Dear Christian Friends and especially our Youth Confirmands:

THE RISEN LORD APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES

“Peace be with you” (John 20:19). These were the first words Jesus spoke to his fearful disciples when he appeared to them after his resurrection. His purpose in speaking this blessing was to assure them of his peace through the forgiveness of sins. They all needed forgiveness for running away and abandoning Jesus, except for John who stayed at the foot of the cross. We can imagine how frightened they might be at seeing Jesus alive and in person after their cowardly behavior. But now in his third appearance, his purpose is a bit different. He wants to reassure them of his boundless love for them, and that is something you confirmands will need to remember throughout your life as well.

Jesus had commanded his disciples to meet him in Galilee. While they waited, they ventured out from behind locked doors to do some fishing on the Sea of Galilee. After a night of fruitless labor the disciples had more than fishing frustrations on their hearts and minds. They were waiting for Jesus’ instructions and were wondering how the ministry of the gospel would move forward. Jesus knew they needed his appearance again to show his love for them and to give them spiritual guidance.

How often do you need Jesus to “appear” to you? Do you only need him as a last resort when you’re desperate? Do you only call on him like a genie in a bottle when you know he’ll grant your wish? If you only think that you need Jesus to “appear” to you on certain days at certain times, then ask yourself when you had a day with no problems or an hour with no sin. You need his constant presence.

In the most important way, Jesus appears to you like appeared to his disciples. No, not in a physical, visible way, but he still comes in a very real way in his Word and sacraments. There he reveals himself to you. There you find calm when the waves of fear and doubt and even self-reliance sweep over you. There you find forgiveness when sins hound and haunt you. There you find his loving hand guiding you through problems and troubles. There you find reassurance of his love, even when your labors seem as fruitless as a night of fishing without catching any fish.

Look up in faith. See your Lord standing with you in his Word. Kneel and receive him in his Holy Supper. Recognize him there and rejoice! Don’t miss an opportunity to do so. You have been faithful in your worship attendance this last year. That faithfulness at worship will be even more important throughout your high school and college years. Why?

THE RISEN LORD APPEARS IN DAILY TASKS

Consider this: It takes a while for the shock to subside after traumatic experiences. The attempted break-in at your house can cause many sleepless nights. After our church was broken into years ago and personal items were taken from my office, it was difficult for me to work and concentrate in my office for a few weeks; my comfortable, safe place had been violated. A sudden death in the family can halt your life for weeks. It takes time to process shocking events.

The disciples had been through much trauma only a couple weeks before their fishing excursion. They witnessed their Savior and friend arrested, tried, beaten, crucified, and buried. Meanwhile, they dealt with their weaknesses of desertion and denial of the Lord. Then, in one miraculous instant, God brought them from the lowest depths to the highest joy through Jesus' resurrection.

After such an emotional rollercoaster ride, it must have been good to settle down and get back to normal. While they waited for Jesus to appear again in Galilee, it was natural for these former fishermen to go fishing. Although they didn't catch anything that night, it must have been very calming to engage in a familiar activity again after several years. It is significant that Jesus appeared to them during this relatively mundane activity.

After a big event or tragedy, it's refreshing and relaxing to go back to what we know. There's something comforting about an everyday routine with no surprises or disturbances on the horizon. But does there have to be a big event or tragedy for Jesus to appear to you? It seems that way for some Christians—the Chreaster (Christmas & Easter) Christians—some of whom we just saw a couple weeks ago for the first time in several months. But even for the rest of us who are in worship regularly, week after week, does there have to be a big event or disaster for us to really reach out for Jesus on a personal level, earnestly pray to him, study his Word privately and with others, and expect his presence? When everything is normal, calm, and peaceful, don't forget the precious presence of your Savior. You NEED him in the HECTIC hour and in the PEACEFUL hour.

Life in high school and college can be awesome and confusing, difficult and exciting, frantic and just plain great—and it can be all those things at the same time. Remember that calm times are valuable times to rejuvenate and recharge with God's Word in worship and Bible study. Then you will be better prepared to stand firm against the temptations of the devil and persevere through the trials that the Lord may allow. Include the Lord Jesus in your daily tasks as you strive to live a life that glorifies him. Then see THE RISEN LORD APPEAR to you; see how his sustaining hand and loving heart will bless all you do. Amen.