

# The Believer's Provision for Service

## John 21:1-14

**Introduction:** There is a lot of alarming information about the state of our economy and culture today. There are more working age people out of work right now than at any time in the last 50 years. The number rose by several hundred thousand last month and yet the unemployment rate [supplied by our government] dropped. The Stock Market hit 17,000 on Friday and the press is saying it was because of all the new jobs and upturn in the economy. But the reality on the ground is vastly different. Full time jobs are going extinct and people are working two minimum wage jobs with no benefits just to get by. We could talk about the politics of why this is happening, but that would not be helpful. That cannot be altered until there is an election. For now we are observers and pawns in the drama that is called life in America and the world.

So...what I want to talk to you about this morning is more practical and down to earth. I want to put it in the form of a question that we will answer from the Gospel of John. "Does God take care of the physical needs of His own?" or "Does our Heavenly Father care for the physical needs of His earthly children?" We would say yes I think to both questions, but at the same time, we worry that He will not actually do for us what we say He will do. We are not alone in this fear. Men who actually spent three years of their lives living with Jesus had the same anxiety. These men had seen Jesus create food and had experienced Christ's compassion for the crowds, but now He was gone and they are on their own. They have returned to their previous lives in Galilee and we are like them in so many ways. We know Christ, and have seen His power, but we constantly succumb to the thought that we are on our own to make our way through this world....Are we???

**John 21:1-14** After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested *Himself* in this way. <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup> But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." <sup>6</sup> And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find *a catch*." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. <sup>7</sup> Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped *for work*), and threw himself into the sea. <sup>8</sup> But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net *full* of fish. <sup>9</sup> So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire *already* laid and fish placed on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." <sup>11</sup> Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus

said to them, "Come *and* have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave *it* to them, and the fish likewise. <sup>14</sup> This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead.

John includes this gospel postscript for several reasons. Chapter 21 answers many questions for us. We want to consider only one of them this morning. It is simple enough and yet it profoundly effects your life at its deepest level. The question again is "will Christ meet your physical needs as His child or must you do that on your own?" Let's see what these 14 verses reveal.

**After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, [1a]:** He did not just show up. He did something more than that. The Greek word translated "manifested" means "disclose" or "reveal." Its use reveals that after the resurrection men were not physically able to recognize Jesus without help. Today the same is true of spiritual recognition. Christ seems vivid to those to whom He reveals Himself, but to others He remains hidden.

**1 Corinthians 12:3b** .... no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** .... a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

**Romans 3:11** no one understands; no one seeks for God.

**He manifested *Himself* in this way [1b]:** John then tells how Jesus comes to the shore of the lake, but no one recognizes Him. We are about to see how Jesus manifested or revealed Himself to the disciples. It is customized for these men. Jesus came looking for them. Jesus then revealed or disclosed Himself to men who we would imagine need no such help...but we would be wrong. This is what Jesus did when He came looking for us. The Holy Spirit does this in our day, but it is the same work of God and it is focused in exactly the same direction. The Holy Spirit is disclosing Christ to men vividly, intimately, and convincingly.

**John 16:13-15** <sup>13</sup> "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup> "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. <sup>15</sup> "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

When Christ reveals Himself fully, He is irresistible. Let me tell you why. Everyone believes in what they are totally convinced of! Yes or No? YES! It is the work of the Holy Spirit to manifest Christ to men. It is not the work of the Spirit to get you to believe certain doctrines. That comes afterward. The Spirit shows Christ to men. That is what you should do when you speak of Christ. Know Jesus better and talk about Him. Jesus Himself said...

**Acts 1:8** <sup>8</sup> .....you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be **My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." [witnesses of me....testifiers of me]

**Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. [2]:** Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John are with Jesus for sure. Andrew is Peter's Brother and Philip is usually found with this group in Scripture. They probably were the other two. These are the fisherman of His disciples. Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot were not there.

**Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will also come with you." [3a]:** Always the impulsive leader, Peter is tired of sitting around. He was a doer and because of this a natural leader. Everyone followed his lead in this. Peter is returning to his original vocation. He needed to earn a living. Jesus had predicted that they would return to their former way of life when they abandoned Him.

**John 16:32** <sup>32</sup> "Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to **his own home**, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

"His Own" means "His own affairs or life." This would be in contrast to Christ's affairs and His life purposes. Jesus had called these men to actually give up their own affairs and concern themselves with His. He did not call all men to this and still does not.

**Mark 1:16-17** <sup>16</sup> As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Now....I know what you are thinking. "Then this is an account of how God cares for His full time servants and not something that concerns someone like me who has to work for a living." Actually....it is both! It is about how Christ provides for His own children and it is about where the physical provision for every life comes from.

**They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. [3b]:** Everyone believes they can provide for themselves until they discover otherwise. This is the snare Satan will set for your mind. When we are having financial hard times the "Accuser of the Brethren" is right there to tell you that "God does not care for you because you are not able to provide for yourself." Actually the exact opposite is the truth. God knows that peace about our physical needs comes when we discover that you cannot do it by yourself. Only the Bible and Preachers of Christ will tell you this. The world and Satan will never tell you this! Those who do not trust [believe in] Christ see physical need as a reason never to trust Him instead of the reason to only trust Him.

Are you getting this? These professional fishermen had worked all night casting nets, pulling them up empty, rowing to another spot on the lake doing it again and again and again. Nothing! It is dawn. Their muscles are aching and they are hungry. It was a

miserable and fruitless night! And where was Jesus during the night? Letting them work for nothing.

**But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.[4]:** This verse confirms two things. Jesus is perfectly aware of your needs and He Himself is the only source of provision. We do not see this on our own. Christians who stay away from Gospel preaching will not learn this principle from CNN or Fox News. Christ is the sufficient source for every need. We only learn that in The Word and by The Spirit.

Jesus proved throughout His ministry that He cared when people were sick and hungry and grieving. He healed, He fed and He comforted. He also taught people that God knows we have physical needs. The problem is that we do not know it until we actually lack things. Men do not see the rain, the crops, the job, the house, the wife and children as gifts from God. They are gifts from the world! BUT...when they are touched, hindered, troubled or withdrawn in any way Satan accuses God of withholding good.

Does a nursing baby worry about food in between nursings? How about a two year old in your home. When he or she is hungry you do what?...you feed them! Of course. But, when they leave home and start working that is a different story. Now they are dependent on only themselves and the anxiety begins in earnest. This is what is going on here. This is why Jesus taught us saying...

**Matthew 6:31-34** <sup>31</sup> "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' <sup>32</sup> "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. <sup>34</sup> "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

These seven guys were there when Jesus said this. You yourselves have heard it a hundred times, but they are just words. They actually make us feel worse because now we have guilt for worrying. Many believers have bought the spin that God does not know or does not care because we are having hard times.

Your greatest and eternal good is to know God through Christ and to trust Him with your entire life and not just your soul when you die. We will not do this when we have everything we need. We must know that we cannot provide for ourselves before we will seek Him and His kingdom and righteousness. Keeping back something is how God draws us to the source of all things.

If you have everything you need, but lack a sense of Christ's provision, let me give you a tip. Start giving more money away. Consciously make yourself more dependent on His provision. Do not do it to get more!...Do it to seek His presence and experience His provision in your life!

**So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." [5]:** So a night of failure has evoked this simple question with the implied

answer. He calls them children...not “disciples or followers.” This is not a common address. Yes they were someone’s children, but they were grown men with their own vocation and equipment and expertise. Jesus calls them young boys. Children who cannot provide for themselves, but need someone else to give them what they need. They had to admit...because of their failure....that they had not been able to catch a single fish.

**And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. [6]:** Remember how John said that Jesus revealed Himself to them and then adds “and he revealed Himself in the following way?” Jesus now uses an incident that they should have been able to remember pretty well. It had happened only 3 years before in about the same place. Luke recorded it for us.

**Luke 5:1-8** Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; <sup>2</sup> and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and *began* teaching the people from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say *and* let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets *began* to break; <sup>7</sup> so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw *that*, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

**Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. [7]:** And John did remember...I think. “This is almost exactly what happened when Jesus first strolled on this shore and called us to follow Him. How could we have traveled that far with the Lord and forgotten this?” Have you ever said something like that to yourself? How could I have forgotten what God showed me, taught me or gave me? How could I have forgotten how He changed me or comforted me?” John was always the first to understand and learn. Peter was always the first to act and accomplish! They were a good match in ministry.

It would take too long to get to shore with all these fish. Peter is drawn like magnet to the one he has denied and denounced just this past few days. You would think he would have swam out to sea, but he heads straight for shore. Why...because Jesus has come seeking, calling and drawing Peter. Even at your worst, Jesus loves you as His child. Maybe Peter remembered something else Jesus had said and promised.

**Luke 22:31-32** <sup>31</sup> "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

**But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net *full* of fish. [8]:** The other six guys came dragging the nets behind the boat. Peter is the boss here and he jumped out of the boat. Somebody needs to take care of the equipment and all these fish.

**So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire *already* laid and fish placed on it, and bread. [9]:** When they finally got to shore they saw that Jesus had kindled a fire, already had some fish and some bread cooking on it. A hot and tasty breakfast after a grueling and disappointing night of work. He could have given them a stale crust...instead He prepared them a hot breakfast. This is another way in which Jesus disclosed Himself to the disciples. They are out at the lake...There is no bakery! Jesus has nothing to fish with and yet there is bread and fish to feed his disciples who had abandoned Him at the cross, hid themselves and now returned to their former way of life. They were there in this same region a year or so ago when

**Matthew 15:32-38** <sup>32</sup> ....Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way." <sup>33</sup> The disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in *this* desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?" <sup>34</sup> And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." <sup>35</sup> And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; <sup>36</sup> and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples *gave them* to the people. <sup>37</sup> And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. <sup>38</sup> And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

**Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have now caught." [10]:** But there is something else going on here. Jesus has provided them with a huge catch of fish. **They** threw in the net...**they** rowed the boat to shore and now **they** were going to eat the fish that God had provided and not the ones that **they** had provided.

Let me ask you a simple question..."Will you eat the food you have provided today at lunch or will you eat what God has provided? Are you driving the car you provided of the one God gave you the ability to purchase and maintain? These are not small questions. They go to the heart of this passage of Scripture. Does God take care of His own children in the world and why do we sometimes have physical needs? Is God withholding good from you or is He drawing you to Himself [the source of all good] so He can be your provider.

Why does this matter? Because once you get this you have defeated worry. Satan's spin game is up. You realize that everything is supplied by God. The intellectual and physical abilities you possess...God! The circumstances you face...God again! When He withholds anything it is to cause us to see that it is not us who provides for ourselves. It is He who gives us means to provide.

**Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. [11]:** So Peter ran over

to the boat and began to drag this net to shore. I can guarantee you that he was not congratulating himself for being the best fisherman on the lake that morning even though there were more fish than any of them had probably ever seen at one time.

Don't waste any time trying to find the hidden meaning of 153. John liked to give specifics when he wrote. He told how many water pots were at the Wedding in Cana and how many yards the boat was from shore....besides that D. A. Carson notes that

*"It is unsurprising that someone counted them, either as part of dividing them up amongst the fishermen in preparation for sale, or because one of the men was so dumbfounded by the size of the catch that he said something like this; "can you believe it? I wonder how many there are?"*

**Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. [12]:** Jesus does not look the same. He is in the perfect immortal body that He will take back into the throne room of God. Mary had stood talking to Him by the tomb but did not recognize Him. The two on the Emmaus road did not recognize Him. And now these seven are still struggling with this while at the same time knowing from all that Jesus has just done that it absolutely had to be the Lord.

**Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. [13]:** They did not make a move to come to the food that Jesus had prepared. They just stood there so Jesus picked up the bread and fish and began to serve them. The God of Creation is serving His creatures. He had washed their feet before the Cross. He had told them simply...

**Mark 10:45** <sup>45</sup> "..... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Another time he had taught them the path to greatness in His Kingdom...

**Luke 22:25-27** <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' <sup>26</sup> "But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. <sup>27</sup> "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.

Parents...instead of just taking care of your children...serve them. That is what Christ did for His children. Do it because Christ has served you. Husbands and wives just the same. Men what if you repaired the house and car because you wanted to serve you wife instead of stop her from nagging you? What dynamic would that introduce you're your family. Wives....you can apply this to your marriage too in dozens of ways. Christ has served you. He created your life out of nothing. He has given you everything you possess or will ever posses or enjoy.

**This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead. [14]:** This is the third time that a group of disciples saw Him. This is important because mass allusions are not common. One person might imagine having seen Him, but all of them saw Him, caught the fish and ate the breakfast He prepared. It really happened.

**CONCLUSION:** I said earlier that this was not just about how God cares for full time Christian ministers. It is about how fish are caught. It is also about how profit comes from honest work. It is not a result of work or strength alone. The disciples had plenty of both and still came up empty. It turns out that they needed to remember that Christ sustained them when they had left their boats and nets three and a half years ago. He can and will do it even more easily now that He is resurrected glorified and poised to send the Holy Spirit into their lives.

We need to know that God gives the profits and benefits we get from our hard work. We are not alone in our labor. Moms...you are not alone when you are working to care for and serve your children 24 hours a day. Dad's....it is not just up to you alone to make enough money to sustain your family. God wants us all to look to Him for our daily needs and to praise and worship Him for His provision for us. Don't look at your work tomorrow as if God has nothing to do with it. Please!

Instead...Decide today to live a life of gratitude for what God has already given you and of prayerful dependence for what you still need. This is the same for those who leave their nets and boats and for the ones who labor catching real fish for a living. All are dependent on Christ for their daily bread. Jesus said....

**Matthew 6:25-30** <sup>25</sup> ..... "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? <sup>27</sup> "And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? <sup>28</sup> "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. <sup>30</sup> "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith!