

04.20.2025

John 21:1-19

******This is a general script, not exact*** to ***This is a working manuscript and is not an exact transcription of the sermon. Actual audio content may differ slightly from these notes.******

- He is risen! Happy Easter. Please open your Bibles to the 21st chapter of John. We'll be in vss. 1-19 this morning.
- As you turn there, I want to tell you a story from a little over a decade ago. It was Easter Sunday and I had the flu, only I didn't know that I had the flu. I went to church feeling a bit under the weather but as the service progressed, I regressed.
- Thankfully, I wasn't preaching so I was counting down the minutes until the service ended and I could go home and go to sleep but right before we dismissed, I got word that a couple needed some immediate pastoral help.
- So I found myself sticking around for a counseling session and the details were crazy. Easter morning, this wife had discovered her husband's lengthy affair. She was distraught. A day of familial tradition and joy and pastel was suddenly robbed of all color and anything except anger and sorrow.
- I could hear the despair in her voice, but also could see the pain and seeming remorse in her husband's eyes. I've sat across from calloused adulterers before, but this wasn't that. It was obvious that this man was undone and contrite.
- And as we talked, I talked of the resurrection. I reminded them of the fact that Easter means that death doesn't win. In fact, death itself is dealt a deadly wound. Death dies.
- And this has profound implications for our lives. It means that God wins. There is no disorder, no disease, no death that is beyond the power of resurrection. There is no child that is too far gone, no marriage that is too broken, no sinner that is too hardened, no sin that is too formidable, no desire that is too dark.
- I want to repeat that because I think deep down many of us fail to really believe it. As I repeat this, I want you to really consider what I'm saying and ask if you really believe it. Its easy to believe when your marriage is healthy and your child is faithful and your family is great and birds are whistling while you walk blissfully through life, but do you believe it when its dark and dreary and the sun doesn't seem to shine and the wound is still bleeding and the pain seems unbearable? That's the question.
- So again, Easter means, at least in part that there is no disorder, no disease, no death that is beyond the power of resurrection. There is no child that is too far gone, no marriage that is too broken, no sinner that is too hardened, no sin that is too formidable, no desire that is too dark.
- If Christ can raise from the dead, then there is no such thing as hopeless despair for the Christian. There is always hope. There is no darkness too dark for the light of Christ, no death too dead for the life of Christ. In the resurrection, we see, as C.S. Lewis wrote, a little hint that all that is sad is becoming untrue.
- And I was thinking about this as I thought of today's text. This husband, absolutely broken, sitting in the weight of conviction and shame reminds me of Peter as we begin this story. He's denied Christ not once, not twice, but thrice and not privately, but

publicly, and he's done so after boasting of how he alone would remain faithful. He's call his shot and struck out...and we'll see a few reminders that this is on his mind as the narrative progresses.

- And yet he doesn't remain in that shame. The story doesn't end on a sour note. Just like this broken marriage didn't crumble. Last I heard this couple had fully reconciled and were happier and healthier than ever.
- Likewise, Peter doesn't persist in the disgrace, but is restored and refreshed by the love of Christ and my hope is that we will be as well.
- So let's pray and we'll dive in together.
- Self, others, me.

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. 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. (John 21:1-3)

- This is now our 3rd sermon in our little Johannine Easter mini-series. 2 weeks ago we considered the trial of Christ &, in particular, His dialogue with Pontius Pilate. Last week we looked at His crucifixion and considered the theme of fulfillment of OT imagery and typology. This week we want to consider His resurrection because it's a pretty big deal, maybe the biggest deal ever.
- So we're looking at the third of His resurrection appearances in John. Trying to perfectly harmonize these appearances with those in the synoptics can be challenging, but not impossible, but John only mentions three in particular.
 - First, He appears to Mary and then the disciples on Easter Sunday. Then 8 days later He appears to Thomas. Finally, sometime a few days later we have the events of John 21.
 - BTW, one of the things that is important to recognize anytime someone says that there are contradictions between the various gospel accounts is that Christians are really in a lose/lose situation.
 - If the resurrection accounts were just really obviously and easily harmonized, if there were no difficulties at all, the disciples would be accused of conspiring. But if there are any perceived inconsistencies then they're accused of contradicting each other.
 - Now, I don't know that I can personally harmonize every single seeming inconsistency off the top of my head, but I can say that in all of my years of study, there has never been a single instance in which a logical answer isn't available.
 - You may have to look for it, but sometimes the greatest insights come from the greatest effort.
- Back to John. The disciples are now back in Galilee. They're in Galilee because Jesus had told them to go to Galilee. Look at Matthew 28:10
 - *Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." (Matthew 28:10)*

- So they've left Jerusalem and gone back to Galilee which was the base of operations for Christ's earthly ministry and where the disciples were from.
- Now, you'll notice the lake is called Tiberias. John's the only gospel that calls it the Sea of Tiberias. It was so named because Herod Antipas had founded a city there named Tiberias. John himself also calls it the Sea of Galilee as well and that's Matthew and Mark call it while Luke calls it the Lake of Gennesaret because Gennesaret kinda sounds like the Hebrew word for a lyre and that's what the lake is shaped like.
- BTW, don't get hung up on the difference between a lake & a sea. Those are modern distinctions that the ancient world didn't make. Just like they would have no problem calling a whale a fish rather than a mammal. For anyone prior to the 18th century, a whale was a big fish so maybe that's what swallowed Jonah. Who knows. God's point isn't to answer our zoological curiosity.
- But anyway, that's the setting. They're back home.
- And that's where Jesus reveals Himself to them again. That word "revealed" is important. It shows this is a revelatory act. John has emphasized that word throughout the book in showing that John the Baptist reveals the Son and the Son reveals the Father and in His miracles He revealed His glory. This is another one of these acts of self-disclosure to demonstrate the glory of God and, in particular, the glory of resurrection.
- This particular account involves 7 disciples, two of whom remain unnamed. It could be significant that there is 7 and Christ makes 8 and the number 8 often symbolizes a new creation, but considering that John doesn't draw attention to the number, it probably isn't wise to speculate.
 - You'll also notice the reference to the Sons of Zebedee. Also called the Sons of Thunder or Boanerges, this refers to James and John. For a number of reasons, this John is generally thought to be the author and so we have eyewitness testimony to this account.
 - We talked about the importance of that for establishing historicity last week. Remember how John emphasized that they had seen and heard and even touched the risen Lord! That's important. Christianity isn't just some telephone game of oral tradition passed along, its rooted and grounded in actual historic events with actual witnesses. In fact hundreds of them! Here we're talking about 7 of them.
- So they've been told to go to Galilee and wait and apparently they get bored or hungry or something so Peter says, I'm going fishing.
- Now, a lot has been made of this. You have some who think that this indicates the Peter has just decided to give up on Jesus and go back to his old lifestyle as a fisherman. I think that's making far too much of this. Some say that out of shame for his denial, like Jonah, he's run from the Lord and has reverted back to life before Christ attempting to fill the void in his life with work.
- I don't think that's John's point. As one commentator said, its impossible to imagine this story taking place after Pentecost as Peter is established in the role of an official witness and apostle, but its going too far to accuse Peter of apostasy here. Remember, He's already repented. After the rooster crowed, he wept tears of contrition. And he's already seen the resurrected Lord at least a couple of times by now. Is there still some lingering

shame? Absolutely, we'll see that being dealt with later in the text, but we don't want to swing the pendulum too far in that direction.

- That said, I do think there's something to the fact that they labored all night and yet caught nothing. Remember what Jesus had said in John 15:5
 - *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* (John 15:5)
- What's really fascinating is that at least 4 of the disciples are fishermen by trade and yet not once in Scripture are they said to catch a fish without the Lord's intervention.
 - "Remarkably, the disciples never catch a fish in any of the Gospels without Jesus' help." (Andreas Kostenberger)
- As a novice fisherman, I can relate to that. But this reminds me of my son's first fishing trip. If you ask him, he caught 3 fish. But in reality, I bought the bait, I cast the line, I set the hook, & I even reeled it in.
- That's like the disciples in the gospels. Their work is ineffectual apart from divine enablement & I think John is emphasizing that sense of futility in this story. Not only does Christ sovereignly provide the subsequent abundance of fish, but He has also ordained the fruitless night of fishing in order to show forth that contrast. He's frustrated their efforts in order to emphasize His provision & power. He's made them taste futility so that the fruit will be sweeter when it comes.
- In other words, their fishing experience becomes a parable, a picture of the reality of the futility of our work in our own strength. As Psalm 127 says:
 - *Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.* (Psalm 127:1)
- We might add to that, unless the Lord gives the fish, the fisherman labors in vain. Or you could add in whatever profession you have. Unless the Lord gives new birth, the evangelist labors in vain. Unless the Lord blesses the home, the parents labor in vain.
- As Christ says, apart from me you can do nothing.
- If you want the credit and the glory and the boast, that's discouraging. But if you want to be fruitful, then this is actually encouraging as we'll see. Look at vss. 4-6.

• ***Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on 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 of the quantity of fish. (John 21:4-6)***

- Meanwhile, on the shore, Jesus suddenly appears. Notice John doesn't narrate his coming, He's just there. Kinda like He just appeared in the locked room earlier in the book.
- But no one recognizes Him. This could be because it's still kinda dark out and they're 100 hundred yards away or this could be because their eyes were kept from recognizing Him as with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.
- Regardless, they don't recognize Him, even when He calls out. The fact that they don't recognize Him even when He speaks suggests that this is a theological veiling. We see in Scripture a degree of continuity & also discontinuity between the pre and post

resurrection body of Christ. We don't want to swing the pendulum too far in either direction, but just maintain that theological tension.

- I think this points to another common Johannine theme which is that you can't see or know or love God apart from divine enablement. Again, apart from me, you can do nothing, including recognize me. That's part of the theme of divine sovereignty that runs through the book. Even the ability to see and believe the gospel is owing to grace.
- So they don't recognize him, but He tells them to try one more time and tells them where to do so. I don't know why they listened. If I was a professional fisherman and some random stranger on the beach gave me advice, I don't know if I'd take it, but they do.
- And now, work that was futile is suddenly fruitful.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 7-8.

That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. (John 21:7-8)

- There is an interesting interplay you see in the gospels between Peter and John. As D.A. Carson notes:
 - "Characteristically, the beloved disciple exhibits quick insight, and Peter quick action." (D.A. Carson)
- For John there is a sense of déjà vu in this miracle. We'll see that theme of déjà vu again shortly. In Luke 5, when Jesus first calls the disciples to follow Him, there's a very similar miracle. Fishermen labored all night and yet caught nothing until Christ bids them and then they catch an abundance.
- So John is the first to make the connection, but Peter is impetuous. He leaves the boat and his friends and the fish and swims to shore.
- Meanwhile, his buddies have to drag the net back.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 9-11.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out 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, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. (John 21:9-11)

- Last week, we mentioned little Easter eggs hidden in the text, like the fact that Peter mentioned that the guards used a hyssop branch to give Jesus sour wine.
- Now we come to another. Notice the reference to a charcoal fire. In Greek, this is one word, anthrakia from which we get the word anthrax because it causes dark sores that resemble charcoal.
- But this word is only used one other time in the entire NT. Every other time a fire is mentioned it is the generic word for fire, pur, from which we get the idea of a funeral pyre or pyromaniac.

- So, where is the one other use of anthrakia? Well, in John. Chapter 18:18
 - *Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.* (John 18:18)
- What is happening there? Well, Peter is about to deny Christ. How many times? 3. Now take that & read it in relation to today's passage. How many times will Christ ask Peter if he loves Him? 3.
- That's not a coincidence, that's providence. I think Jesus is recreating that scene to some extent. This is another bit of déjà vu, a glitch in the Matrix, a tale of two fires.
- Have you ever gotten food poisoning so badly that even the smell of that food now makes you nauseas? Well, that's what I imagine this would have been like for Peter. He gets to the shore and he's cold & wet & all of a sudden he smells the smell of his failure. He smells the shame.
- And notice a few other things. BTW, we mentioned last week how important observation is to biblical interpretation. You gotta see what's there before you can know what to do with it.
- So notice a couple of things.
 - First, notice that Jesus had already made a fire. A few chapters back He washes their feet, but even now He's still serving. That tells us something about the humility of authority and leadership. True leadership doesn't just bark out orders, make me a fire. Good and godly leadership is humble and servant-hearted.
 - Second, notice that there are already fish on the fire. Jesus didn't need them to catch anything. Its like me letting my son help me mow the lawn last week, I didn't need Him, but I chose to allow him to "help" for his sake. Likewise, Jesus doesn't need the fish that they have caught, but He allows them to participate.
 - He could speak a fish into being by the word of His power, but He uses the fish & loaves of the boy and multiplies them. Likewise here. He doesn't need the fish that they've caught, but the fish are important for the sake of the parable, the picture, the lesson of provision.
 - For whatever reason, God perfectly works through imperfect means.
- So Jesus tells Peter to go help his brothers and he drags the net ashore. And the nets aren't breaking. Now this is in contrast to Luke 5 where the texts explicitly says that the nets were breaking because of the number of fish. I think John's point is that the nets aren't breaking now because of providence.
- That again shows a contrast. Not only is self-effort futile, but unstable. Our own nets break. We can't handle the stress of success. Only in Christ are our efforts sanctified and strengthened.
- And notice one more thing. Notice the number of fish. 153.
- I wish I could explain to you how much of a beating it was for me to spend hours trying to figure out if there is any sort of spiritual significance to this number.
 - Jerome thought that the number 153 corresponded to ancient books that listed the number of fish species in the area as 153. The problem with that is that those books or at least the ones we know about actually listed 157 species.

- Augustine thought that if you added up the numerical value of certain words, it would equal 153.
- Others thought this was fulfilling some obscure OT reference.
- But at the end of the day, I agree with Dr Carson who, after listing out various theories said:
 - “If the Evangelist has some symbolism in mind connected with the number 153, he has hidden it well.” (D.A. Carson)
- So why does he mention the number? I think the answer is because he’s an eyewitness and he gives eyewitness testimony. If you catch a big fish you want to know how big it is, how long and how heavy.
- Well, likewise, if you just haul in a miraculous number of fish and the nets aren’t torn, you might wonder, how many fish is that? Especially because you’re planning to sell them as a professional fisherman. You gotta count them to know how many you can sell.
- So I think the point of the precision is that this really happened and its historicity is grounded in eyewitness testimony with precise detail.
- Let’s keep going. Vss. 12-14.

Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead. (John 21:12-14)

- I find this passage to be confusing. Notice the word dared. None of the disciples dared to ask him. Well why would they dare to ask him if they knew it was him?
- I think this is John’s way of saying that their minds are still blown. Its really hard for most of us to put ourselves in the disciples sandals or crocs. We know about the resurrection. But for a good first century Jew, the resurrection is some future reality when all of the dead will be raised and God will be vindicated.
- The fact that the kingdom is already but not yet is disorienting for them. So I think they know that’s it’s Him, but also kinda don’t know. Again, there is continuity and discontinuity between the pre and post resurrection appearance of Christ. I think they kinda want to ask Him, is it really you, but they don’t dare.
- So Jesus now gives them bread and fish. Just like the feeding of the 5000 from John 6, we have the same meal. And the same miracle, supernatural provision.
- So perhaps another bit of déjà vu.
- And again, we see Jesus serving, playing the role of a host. He gives them the food. Perhaps he broke the bread and spoke a blessing over it, but if so John doesn’t mention it. There is no overlap here with the last supper because you may recall that John doesn’t include the institution of the Lord’s supper in his gospel. That’s something we get from the synoptics, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
- And the pericope ends here. Remember that in Biblical studies, the word pericope refers to a complete thought. Sometimes that’s a paragraph or an entire chapter. In general, these are broken up in our English bibles with subheadings like your text might have “Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples” before chapter 21. Those words aren’t part of the

original text of Scripture, they are the translators way of breaking up the text into pericopes.

- As you can probably see in your Bible, the pericope ends at verse 14 so I could stop here, but I want you to see what's happening in the next few verses that bring out some of the nuances that we've already seen.
- There's still a little meat on the bone so we need to keep going to get it.
- Look at 15-17.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17)

- So now there is a textual link between these stories. Notice that it doesn't ambiguously say sometime later, but rather this takes place immediately after they had finished breakfast. In other words, this is a continuation of the previous narrative. They go together. They are chronologically linked.
- And notice that there is no indication that Jesus has pulled Peter aside to have a private conversation. Peter's denial has been public so his restoration will be public, just like Paul rebuking Peter in Antioch in the book of Galatians. Peter is an apostle, a public representative of Christ and he has publicly failed in that office so the consequences are public.
- We have an entire blog on our website on that idea of public rebuke for public sin.
- But don't think of that in a punitive sense. Think of it in a redemptive sense. Notice what Jesus is doing here. There's a hint of rebuke, but only to really drive home the restoration. That's the point of the narrative. The point isn't Peter's shame, but Christ's work to liberate Peter from the shame.
- Christ is intentionally rehearsing the worst night of Peter's life. How cruel, you might think. How kind, in reality.
- Peter is being publicly confronted, but also publicly comforted by Christ.
- Both of those are really important. Christ doesn't minimize the sin. He doesn't say, you denied me, but its okay. No big deal.
- It WAS a big deal. It was a really big deal...that's why all 4 gospels highlight it. He doesn't minimize the sin because to do so would be to implicitly minimize the cross which paid for the sin. His goal isn't that Peter would feel better about himself, but rather that Peter would take his eyes off of himself.
- Jesus doesn't minimize the sin or the forgiveness. Relativism minimizes the sin in order to falsely ignore the shame. Moralism minimizes the forgiveness which only exacerbates the shame, but the gospel is something entirely different than moralism or relativism. The gospel actually slays the shame.

- So Christ confronts, but He also comforts. He doesn't leave Peter sitting in the despair or shame. He draws him out. The shame is not the end, it's the means to the end which is restoration, reconciliation, renewal.
- Remember what we talked about at the beginning. Easter means that there is no disorder, no disease, no death that is beyond the power of resurrection. There is no child that is too far gone, no marriage too broken, no sinner too hardened, no sin too formidable, no betrayal too deep, no shame too shameful.
- There is a sting in Christ's words, but it's the sting of the needle that injects the cure.
- As Peter had denied Christ 3 times so Christ presses him 3 times. And I think Peter gets the reference. The charcoal fire & the 3 questions remind him of his denial & once again he's grieved.
- It's also possible that Jesus' threefold repetition of his question may reflect an ANE custom of reiterating a matter three times before witnesses in order to convey a solemn obligation, but that's debatable and probably secondary at best.
- So let's look at the question, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?
- What does "more than these" mean?
- There are three possible answers.
 - First, he could mean, do you love me more than you love these men? More than your friends.
 - Second, he could mean, do you love me more than you love these fishing things: the boats and fish and nets and so forth. More than your profession.
 - Third, he could mean, do you love me more than these men love me? Although love for Christ should entail the first two, I actually think Jesus is asking this third sense. Why?
 - Well, you remember that what made Peter's failure so stark is that he had been the 1 who said, even if everyone else fails you, I never will. In effect, Peter himself had said, I love you more than these guys do. I'm your number 1 biggest fan. I'm the goat of the disciples.
- So by asking the question in this way, Jesus is again naturally bringing his mind back to that night and that failure. That very night you said you loved me more than them. Do you really?
- Now, there is a little textual thing to deal with here in that the language switches back between two different words for love, *agapao* and *phileo*. And maybe you've heard that there is a significant distinction between those types of love and that there is some huge theological point in which verb is used, but that is almost certainly not the case for a couple of reasons:
 - First, Jesus himself switches from talking about *agapao* to *phileo*.
 - Second, because the NT often uses those verbs interchangeably. For instance, God is said *agapao* love the Son and *phileo* love the Son in different contexts and He *agapeo* and *phileo* loves the disciples. And sometimes *agape* love is used to describe the love of unregenerate humans so it can't just refer to divine love.
 - Furthermore, John uses a number of other synonyms in this very passage. For instance, in addition to using two different words for love, John uses two different words for feeding and caring for the sheep, and he uses two different

words for sheep and lambs, and he uses two different words to describe knowledge.

- Are there some differences in the way that *agape* and *philia* are used in the Bible. Sometimes. But are they generally all that significant? Generally not, certainly not enough to suggest that one is higher and more divine or something.
- Regardless, Jesus asks Peter if he truly loves him. And Peter responds three times. He says yes and then as proof what does he offer? He says, you know.
- No more brashness, boldness, impetuosity. No more, yes, I love you and I'll prove it to you. I'll cut off a guy's ear, I'll boast that I'll never fail you, I'll walk on water. It's as if the self-confidence and assertiveness manifest before the crucifixion had drained away and now the one thing left is an appeal to the only ultimate measure of his love which is Christ's own knowledge of this and all things. All of his efforts have failed and he simply has to rest in knowing that Jesus knows.
- And what's Christ's response to each answer?
- Well, then feed my sheep, tend my lambs.
- In other words, if you love me, then love my people. Express your vertical love horizontally. This is a big theme of 1 John as well. Genuine love for God is manifest in love for others and especially for God's own.
- BTW, there is no hint of Petrine supremacy here like in RC tradition. RCs tend to see this as an elevation of Peter above the other disciples whereas there is nothing in the text to suggest that. In fact, when Peter writes his first epistle, he uses shepherd imagery, but he also just refers to himself as a peer, not a Pope, a fellow elder, a fellow shepherd serving the one true Chief Shepherd. Look at 1 Peter 5 and think about this in light of Christ's charge to feed the sheep:
 - *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1-4)*
 - That's what shepherds do. As Ed preached a few weeks back, they lead, feed, and bleed.
- And there is one other little nuance to bring out here. Again, think back to what Peter is feeling. Shame. Self-pity.
- And how do we confront that? Well, Jesus turns his eyes outward. He says, feed my sheep. Don't look inward. The shame only wins as long as you're focused on yourself. The minute you look upward and outward, the shame begins to die.
- I've found this to be the case in my own historic battle with depression or shame. In those moments where I most want to isolate, healing is actually found in serving others. As we saw throughout Philippians over the better part of the past year, we find joy as we defer to and prefer others, as we empty ourselves of our boasts and preferences and innate sense of glory and serve others instead.
- Let me be very clear, if you struggle with shame, if you struggle with depression, if you feel paralyzed and crippled by anxiety and fear, one of the best antidotes is to simply

commit yourself to serving others. Volunteer at the church or at a local ministry, invite someone over to dinner or out to lunch, offer to help someone with a project, give money to help someone in need, commit day after day to looking outward and serving others and the shame will eventually run out of fuel.

- Let's keep going. Vss. 18-19.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” (John 21:18–19)

- Earlier I mentioned how Jesus is often connecting love for God with love for others in John's gospels. If you truly love God, then you'll love His children.
- But there is another stream of argumentation that Jesus uses as a test of love and that is the test of sacrifice. Shepherds don't merely feed, they bleed.
- Long before telling Peter to shepherd the flock, Jesus had called himself a shepherd and said this in chapter 10
 - *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* (John 10:11)
- And then later He applies a similar standard to all who are his disciples. Look at John 15:13
 - *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* (John 15:13)
- So, if Peter truly loves him, not only will he tend the flock, but he'll lay down his life.
- Back in ch 13 when Peter had presumptuously boasted of his unwavering commitment to Christ. When he said why can't I follow you. I'll lay down my life for you. What was Jesus' response?
 - *Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”* (John 13:36)
- Notice the cryptic phrase at the end, you will follow afterward.
- What was perhaps enigmatic and implicit is now expounded in chapter 21.
- And again, there is comfort in these words. Christ says, in effect, you won't fail in the end. You will follow me. Even unto death.
- To understand that, we need to know that stretch out your hands was an idiomatic expression for crucifixion. Even if we didn't know that, John makes it clear by saying, this was to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.
- Now, that might not seem comforting. I don't know if I would be all that comforted if Christ appeared and told me, take heart, cheer up, you're gonna be crucified. That doesn't seem chipper to me. But, if I put myself in Peter's position, I can understand.
- What is his biggest fear? I would have to imagine that it is faltering again, failing again, denying again. Christ speaks to that fear and says, I've got you. You'll persevere.
- Nevertheless, you'll persevere through pain. The comfort doesn't come from avoiding the pain, but from pushing through it.

- As the gospels often report, there is a cost to discipleship. There is a sacrifice, or rather a life of sacrifices that are necessary.
- And then what does Jesus say? Follow me.
- Think back to the calling of the disciples in Luke 5 where a similar sign of a miraculous catch of fish is given. How does that story end? With Christ saying Follow me.
- That's the application of the text. Follow Christ.
- Wherever and however. Whatever the cost. For Peter it literally meant, follow me to the cross. Follow me to death. Follow me to laying down your life for the glory of God.
- This isn't necessarily a universal call to martyrdom, but it is a call to discipleship and discipleship means sacrifice, pain, suffering, loss.
- And yet again, we hear another echo of Jesus from John's gospel. John 12
 - *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.* (John 12:24-26)
- Notice that combination of Good Friday and Easter Sunday, death and life, darkness and light, humiliation and honor.
- Though the sorrow may last for the night, joy comes in the morning because He is risen...
- This passage is really good news...news of restoration and reconciliation.
- If no one has ever told you before, let me be the first, but you are a sinner. You have opposed a holy God & are justly deserving of wrath & condemnation. But out of the overflow of His love, He has given His son to live a perfect life and to die to save sinners from their sin and reconcile them to the Father.
 - some of us are wallowing in shame. we need to hear that we are loved.
 - some of us are hiding in sin. we need to drag it into the light.
 - some of us are afraid. we need to trust.
 - all of us are broken and in need of grace. we need to believe. trust. receive. embrace. cherish. treasure. savor...the glorious grace of the gospel and love of Jesus.
- Do you get how unnatural this love is? Do you understand how lavish and abundant and extraordinary the love of Jesus is? This isn't cheap and easy love. It came at the cost of Jesus's life...and it demands ours as well.
- This passage demands something of us. It demands that we:
- believe: that Jesus is who the Scripture says He is and has done what it says He has done
- confess: our fears, failures, shame and sins
- repent and turn from those fears, failures, shame and sin
- follow Jesus by living lives of love and laying down our lives for the sake of serving others
- This is what the love of Christ compels us to. This is the kingdom of God. This is how we live out the implications of Easter.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- Two errors to avoid.
 - To minimize my sin. Communion corrects that. My sin was so egregious that Christ died.
 - To minimize forgiveness. Communion corrects that by reminding us of the efficacious nature of the death and resurrection of Christ
- And there is an eschatological element. He says that He won't drink this again until the kingdom. That points to the resurrection.
- Give you a second to think about your sin. Old sin, current sin. Whatever.
- Now I want you to think about that sin as forgiven. Not just wishful thinking, but like we talked about last week. Tetelestai. It is finished.
- Before we partake, I want to read from Colossians 2 which connects Christ's death with our forgiveness and His resurrection with our confidence and new life.
- As we talked about in the sermon, shame can be debilitating, but there is hope and freedom in the good news of our resurrected Lord. Believe that as we read this.
- *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* (Colossians 2:13-14)
- So let's take in assurance of God's grace and love.
- The body of Christ...