

Resurrecting Hope: Do You Love Me?

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[0 : 0 0] So last week was Easter Sunday. We had a wonderful celebration of Jesus' victory over death, and we recognized that. Last week, we also started a new sermon series, and you see the title card here, called Resurrecting Hope.

And last week, not surprisingly, was Resurrection Hope. We're going to recognize through this series, as we began last week, that life's greatest challenges are best faced when we have the hope of Jesus' power and presence living within us.

We considered last week that Mary's journey to the tomb on that first Easter morning was met with surprise, because she didn't find Jesus' lifeless body, which is what she expected.

Instead, she saw her Lord face to face, alive and well. His resurrection filled her with hope again, and that changed everything.

And so after Mary encountered Jesus, there were those others who saw him too. And today, we're going to continue to explore how the love of Jesus can restore our hope even after great disappointment.

[1 : 2 0] Most of you know this about me. I value relationships. And often what people may think of me, or how my words or actions may have affected them, affect me far more than they probably should.

Perhaps you've heard of a people pleaser. That's partly me. Perhaps you've heard me say that I'm an overthinker. Me too. I tend to be quick to extend grace and forgiveness to other people, but very slow to do the same to myself.

And I also recognize, like I said, that I overthink things. So I'm glad to have a wife who has an amazing, give yourself a break filter that she extends to me often.

She settles me down. You're in a spiral. Calm down. One of the greatest challenges that each of us can face in life, I believe, is how to handle and navigate relationships.

The reality is that unless you're a hermit living a solitary lifestyle, and in fact, if you were, you wouldn't be here to hear me say this, our lives revolve around relationships, don't they?

[2 : 4 4] Absolutely do. And learning to apologize, learning to forgive, can be some of the most difficult challenges that we face in our lives.

When we experience brokenness between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between friends, it can rob us of our hope for what that relationship could be or could look like in the future.

But in and through the power of Christ, even our relationships, the broken ones, we can have hope.

The story of Jesus' resurrection speaks to these challenges in our lives as well. The resurrection doesn't mean just a very limited amount of things. It means more, and that's why we're exploring this in this series.

As Jesus was being arrested and crucified, we recognize in Scripture that almost all of his closest friends deserted him.

[3 : 49] And in fearing for their own lives, they turned their backs on him. So let's hear a bit about this in John. It's, as Vern talked about Revelation, how appropriate you mention John, because we're talking about John this morning.

And you've heard Leah and I say this before, God is so funny how he goes, oh, you're talking about John? So is he. Surprise! So let's hear a bit about this in John 18, verses 15 to 17, where we read, Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus.

Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty, and brought Peter in.

You're not one of his disciples, are you? The girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, I am not. So continuing in John 18, 25 to 27, jumping a little bit, as Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, you are not one of his disciples, are you?

He denied it, saying, I'm not. One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?

[5 : 20] Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, a rooster began to crow. And you know the story that surrounds this denial.

We heard part of this gospel account during our Good Friday service. So we're told one of the disciples named Peter, who betrays Jesus by denying that he even knows who he is.

After three years of ministry alongside Jesus, Peter carelessly refuses to remain loyal. He denies having even a basic connection to Christ.

Peter's questioned about his connection to Jesus, in Scripture we read, three different times. And each time, he distances himself.

My friends, our lives can be a confirmation or a denial of our connection to Jesus.

[6 : 24] Like Peter, many of us may live or behave at times that we don't even seem to know who Jesus is. Can you maybe recognize that in yourself?

I know I can at times. For me personally, some of the most Christ-like people I know, people who put others first, who care about or are concerned for the welfare of others, who strive to not judge other people, have been people who don't even claim the name of Jesus.

people who don't even claim to be followers of Christ. As Brennan Manning, a favorite author and speaker of mine, once said, the greatest, these are hard words, the greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians.

Those who acknowledge Jesus with their lips walk out the door and deny him with their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.

My friends, we must always ask ourselves, what do our lives, what do our words, what do our actions say about our connection to Jesus Christ?

[7 : 59] Would you like some good news? I was thinking, as we were watching the video intro, I thought, boy, those are hard words in that video.

Boy, I've given you some hard words, but I want to give you some good news. We see that Peter's story, we know that Peter's story does not end in his denial.

And our story doesn't need to end there either. We read in John 21, verses 1 to 3. I love this part of Scripture. This is one of the most powerful relational interactions that we have in the Bible.

Afterwards, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana and Galilee.

The sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together. I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter said to them, and they said, we'll go with you. So they went out, got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

[9 : 13] Following Peter's denial of Christ and Jesus' ultimate death, the Bible says that Peter and the others go back to fishing. These verses give us one of the most, the first, sorry, post-resurrection appearances of Christ.

The first appearances of Jesus to his followers. And many of the men whom Jesus had invited to follow him during his ministry had a background, we know this, as fishermen.

They had left their nets, and we read in Scripture as well, they basically dropped everything and followed Jesus. And I've talked to you before about, what about the cost of your boat or those nets or all those things?

They just walked away. Because they left those things, they left their past, they left the reality of everything they knew because Jesus was going to make them fishers of men.

They believed that Jesus would lead them in restoring the world to the way God had first intended it to be.

[10 : 26] But then after their leader had been killed, they decided to go back to what they had always done, what they had always known, fishing. Not only would that fishing trip that we just heard about have been somber, these folks were mourning the loss of their friend, their teacher, their guide, their Lord.

Verse 3 just told us that their nets were empty as well. They've gone back to fishing and even that isn't working. Let's hear the words of John 21, verses 4 to 9.

This is the part I may have trouble getting through. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, Friends, haven't you any fish?

No, they answered. He said, Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some. When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord. As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, It is the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him for he had taken it off and jumped into the water.

[11 : 54] The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish for they were not too far from the shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Breakfast with Jesus. To the disciples' surprise, Jesus shows up on the shore of the lake where they're fishing.

And they don't recognize him, we read, much like Mary did not recognize him as we learned last week. And the beautiful thing about this story is that Jesus is the one who initiates the restored relationships.

He comes to the shoreline and calls out to the boat. And as soon as the disciples recognize that it is Jesus who told them to fish on the other side of their boat, it's Jesus who miraculously provided this unbelievable catch, Peter leaps into the water to swim to shore.

Friends, Jesus' grace restores our hope. So why does Peter respond so drastically, so quickly? I remember as a child thinking, did he just jump out of a perfectly good boat in the middle of a lake or the ocean?

[13 : 23] Was he crazy? Kinda. But here's why I think Peter wastes no time in leaving the boat. Peter is filled with hope that his relationship with Jesus, which he fully knew was broken, could be restored.

I'm afraid that some of us this morning may feel we've made too many mistakes to be forgiven. Some of us may have lost hope that Jesus could ever love us.

Why did he love me in the first place? Does he still love me now? But all the things I've done. This morning I want to remind you, I want to invite you to see that the Savior has come to the shoreline of your life.

And he's calling out to you to return to him. Offering you grace. grace. The late preacher Charles Spurgeon, maybe that name is familiar, told of an evening when he was riding home after a hard day's work.

He felt weary and depressed when as suddenly as a lightning flash he thought of 2 Corinthians 12, 9, which says, my grace is sufficient for thee.

[14 : 48] He said, I should think that it is, Lord, and burst out laughing. He said that it seemed to make unbelief so absurd. It was as though some little fish being very thirsty was troubled about drinking the river dry and the river said, drink away little fish.

My stream is sufficient for thee. or a man who went way up on a mountain. That's for you, Vern. Saying to himself, I fear I shall exhaust all the oxygen in the atmosphere.

But the earth might say, breathe away, O man, and fill thy lungs ever. My atmosphere is sufficient for thee.

my friends, the miracle of Easter is that because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, all our broken relationships can be restored.

All of our mistakes and shortcomings can and will be covered by God's grace. God's grace is more than enough to fill us with hope once again.

[16 : 12] God's grace is sufficient for us and it's not something we can ever do on our own. It's when we recognize that Jesus has pursued us, has called out to us, that we're prompted, hopefully as instantly and radically as Peter was, to respond in our lives.

God's grace is not so let's pick up the story again. As Peter arrives at the shore, there's a fire burning and Jesus is cooking fish for breakfast.

I can imagine Jesus' loving smile. I can imagine him welcoming the man to the table. This man who so recently denied him in history's, one of history's most well-known examples of denial.

Even people who don't know scripture know that Peter said no three times, a rooster crowed. People know that story. After they had finished eating along the shore, Jesus began a conversation that may have started a bit uncomfortably.

Jesus asked Peter, do you love me? Certainly Jesus is asking this because not long before, Jesus doesn't forget, Peter had given every indication that he did not in fact love him.

[17 : 46] Jesus asked this question three times and Peter responds all three times. With each question, I believe Jesus is resurrecting the hope in Peter that their relationship can be restored.

Lord. It's funny, as I was preparing this sermon and reading about different perspectives on this situation, I always remember understanding it before that it was almost like Jesus was going, yeah, but you said you didn't.

Yeah, that other time you said you didn't. Yeah, and you did it again. Just rubbing his nose in it. But that's not what's happening here at all. Have you ever recognized that actually each one of these times Jesus asks Peter these questions, it's actually a reversal of Peter's denials from just chapters before.

Peter's perfect denial is met by Jesus' perfect restoration. And as I said before, it's one of the most perfect relational interactions in the Bible.

friends, love for Jesus is proven by a life for Jesus. Peter responds to each invitation from Jesus to restore their relationship by answering as honestly as he believes he can about his love.

[19 : 19] And during this conversation, Jesus' invitation ends each time with a call to action. Jesus says, feed my sheep.

I think I've shared this before. Wow, when I'm having a teary moment, I need to not encourage myself to do it more. Could happen. I think I shared with you before, there was a time when I was struggling and I said, Lord, what do you want me to do?

And he cut me off in mid-thought and said, feed my sheep. And I said, that's cheating. You've said that to people many times before.

I need more clarity than feed my sheep, he said again. So I'm seeking to feed. So essentially, Jesus, by saying that to him, is giving Peter the opportunity to demonstrate his love for him, for Peter to demonstrate his love for Jesus, by serving others.

the Bible tells us that Peter did indeed remain true to this call. And ultimately, Peter ends up giving his life to serve the church and feed Jesus' sheep.

[20 : 41] Peter's love for Jesus is proven by his life for Jesus. My favorite thing about the conversation on the shore is how Jesus finishes this discussion.

He invites Peter, as he did at the very beginning, to follow him. And this is a very important truth for us to see this morning.

Every one of us is invited to follow Jesus initially. We're invited to trust him with our lives and to become his followers.

believers. But even when we fail to remain unfaithful, we can recognize that that invitation remains exactly the same, to follow him again.

This morning, Jesus' question to you and to me is simple. Do you love me?

[21 : 45] If the answer is yes, then we must live like it. We must live in that way in which we love others and in which we serve the world.

Because as I said before, our actions will literally speak louder than our words. Our witness to the world becomes in how we reflect Jesus through our lives.

and if your answer right now in the circumstances of your life and the challenges that you're facing, the answer in your mind to that question do you love me is no.

It's through confessing our sin and honestly and sincerely repenting that we can allow the grace of God to wash over us and our hearts will be filled with affection for him again.

my friends I invite you to actually pray this prayer in your hearts with me. Jesus I confess today that I have not loved you with my whole heart.

[22 : 56] I've failed to live a life, a faithful life before you and I've failed to serve those around me. Forgive me I pray Lord and empower me to live in such a way that demonstrates your grace in and through me.

And I ask these things as I seek to follow you nearly, seek you sincerely, and love you more dearly.

Amen.