

John Ch21v1-25 - Follow Me

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Preacher: Ralph Depping

[0 : 00] Well again, welcome everyone. Good morning. It's great to have this opportunity to speak from God's Word this morning.

We will be going through John chapter 21. We're going to read the chapter together through the sermon. So I'm not going to read it ahead, but as we go through, we're going to read it section by section.

Do you like films or books that come with an epilogue at the end of them? Do you like when a film has that little tag at the end?

You know, we've just had our climactic scene. The film's all wrapped up. The story's done. But there's just this other scene, a little bonus right at the end.

And maybe it's to set up the sequel, just a little teaser so that you come back next summer and buy more popcorn. But an epilogue at the end of a book or a film can do quite a bit, can't it?

[1 : 04] It can satisfy our curiosity because it can kind of pan out to the future and give us a view beyond the story. Or it can simply tie up some important loose end.

It can even be a way sometimes for the author to step onto the stage and give their personal views through a character. Well, this morning I want us to read through the Apostle John's epilogue to his story of Jesus.

And it does all of it. It hints at the next installment. It's going to tie up a major loose end. It's going to zoom us into the future.

And it's going to allow the author to step in right at the end. It's an epic epilogue by any stretch. But more importantly in some ways, more than any epilogue of fiction or stage or film, this true epilogue draws us, the reader, into the story.

This true epilogue is going to draw us in as the readers into the story. You see, there's the thinnest gap of a page of paper between what we read in John chapter 21 and our lives today as Christians.

[2 : 31] As John epilogues, he's asking you, you, will you follow Jesus? And will you serve others like Jesus did?

So we're going to go through, as I said, the chapter together in four parts. Bigger parts going to smaller parts.

But first part, the final recap of the story, the final recap story, verses 1 to 14. John has brought the main story to the end of chapter 20.

And if you look at the whole Gospel of John, it began in chapter 1 with a prologue, an opening. And if we turn to chapter 1, I think it just helps us to understand the epilogue a little bit.

So John's prologue in John chapter 1, it takes us out of our time and our space, and it reveals to us God the Son, the eternal Son, the only begotten Son of the Father, God equal with the Father.

[3 : 41] I just want to look at three verses to help us see this. So verse 1 of John chapter 1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is the Word. Jump to verse 14. The Word, that is Jesus, became flesh, and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And jump down to verse 18. No one, no one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is Himself God, and is in closest relationship with the Father.

He has made Him known. So it's fitting that a story that begins with a prologue, John chapter 1, is going to end with this epilogue.

Jesus, the God-man, that we're introduced to in chapter 1. What impact did He have in these 21 chapters? And what legacy has He left?

[4 : 57] So jump back with me, if you will, to chapter 21. Let's look at verses 1 to 3. Afterwards, Jesus appeared again to His disciples by the Sea of Galilee.

It happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, also known as Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.

I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter told them, and they said, We'll go with you. So they went out, and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

First one, Jesus appears, or maybe you could translate it better, reveals Himself to His disciples. The reveal happens back where many of the disciples had first met Jesus at the Sea of Galilee. Here we have, if you count them up, there's seven of the twelve are back at this lake or this sea, and they're back in a familiar setting, doing familiar things.

[6 : 02] You see, Peter and the sons of Zebedee, that's James and John, Peter, James, and John, they'd been business partners together three years previously in the fishing business.

And Peter is back fishing, and the other disciples are happy to go fishing with him. Now we might be tempted to read a little bit too much into these opening verses here.

So we could speculate that, Ah, Peter. Ah, old Peter. He's given up again, hasn't he? He stopped following Jesus. He's kind of taken the keys to the kingdom of God and thrown them back in through the letterbox, and on his way out, he's grabbed his fishing rod, and he's back to the lake fishing.

He's given up on Jesus. But I don't think there's any real strong indication of that here. Back in chapter 20, where the main story is, Peter is the one that's running to the tomb when he hears reports that Jesus has risen.

Peter is seeing the evidence firsthand for the resurrection. He's seen the empty tomb. He's seen the grave clothes that were neatly folded and put to the side.

[7 : 14] On one of Jesus' previous appearances before this third one, Jesus had commissioned the disciples, saying, As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

They're commissioned followers of Jesus. So what do we have here? Well, I think we have the disciples. They're waiting. They're waiting for power to come from on high by the Holy Spirit to begin their mission out from Jerusalem.

And Jesus also said to them that he would see them in Galilee. So while in Galilee, what else can you do? Why not go fishing? Well, fishing, verse 3, why not?

Because fishing can be frustrating. So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Out fishing at night.

Why at night? Well, probably to have fresh fish in the morning to be able to sell at the market. But at night, it can be hard, and they waste the efforts of seven men in one night.

[8 : 21] What a frustration. And do you know what? The disciples have been here before. In Luke's Gospel of Jesus, there's another lack of fish episode.

When Peter, back then, was out fishing with his business partners, and he says, we've worked hard all night, he says to Jesus, and we haven't caught anything. And in that miracle catch of fish, and it's a little spoiler, we're going to have a miracle catch here.

In that miracle catch of fish in Luke, Jesus came up directly to them and told them to put out the nets again. Here, it's a little different.

Jesus appears from a distance as a kind of friendly customer on the shore. Let's look at verses four to six. Early in the morning, after this frustrating night, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

And he called out to them, friends, haven't you any fish? No, they answered. And he said, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.

[9 : 34] When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Friends, any fish? No.

I'm sure there's a bit of frustration. All seven of them probably in unison. Do you know what? Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you'll find some. Well, do you know what they say about customers?

They're always right. And who knows? Maybe there are some fish. And this man from the shore calling out, maybe he might bring some luck and if we put down the net, we'll find, you know, a fish or two.

Not a total ride off of a night out fishing. So the nets go down and then there's a tug. And then there's a real tug. And then there's this frantic activity where the nets are being pulled and the waters are churning and there's flapping.

All seven to the nets. Quick. Secure them. Make sure that they don't break. And haul. And haul. And pull. This isn't some lucky few fish.

[10:41] No, this is hitting the mother load of fish. It's another miracle catch. And then the penny drops. The penny drops for one of them.

I know this fish locating power. I've seen this before. Verse seven. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It's the Lord.

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, It's the Lord. Well, he wrapped his outer garment around him for he'd taken it off. And he jumped into the water. And the other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish.

For they weren't far from the shore, about a hundred meters. And when they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread.

Peter. That's not any man. That's the Lord. Peter remembers what happened before. Let down your nets. You haven't caught anything, but trust me.

[11:44] This is Jesus. Quick, Peter. Quick throw on the top. Leave the haul to the others. They can sort that out. Jumps out of the boat. Wades through a hundred meters to get to the man on the shore.

No delay. And the others, they fall hauling the nets. And they catch up. And there's the burning coals of a fire. The friend has prepared breakfast.

Verse 10. Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish you have caught. So Simon, Peter, he climbs back into the boat and dragged the net ashore.

And it was full of large fish. 153. But even with so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, Come and have breakfast.

None of the disciples dared to ask him, Who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and he gave it to them. And he did the same with the fish.

[12:48] And this was now the third time that Jesus had appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. Bring some fish.

I already have the bread baking here. No need to ask. No need to say it. This is Jesus. Their friend and their Lord.

So what can we learn from this final story in the epilogue? Well, first, and most importantly, Jesus is alive.

And he is still the God-man who serves his friends. And we see Jesus the man, don't we? If we look at verses 4 to 5, there's Jesus walking on a shoreline.

And he's calling out to friends on a boat. And in verses 10 to 12, he's there sitting and having breakfast around the fire and saying, Let me serve you.

[14:00] Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, the humble servant leader, is alive. He strolls. He calls out.

He lights fires. He bakes bread. And he shares out the fish. These are the everyday things from a close, hospitable friend at the beach.

You know it's good to have a friend like Jesus. Jesus. And verses 6 to 7, the command, the call to throw out the net and the miracle hall.

Jesus is God. He is the maker of heaven and earth. He is the one who can walk on water.

He is the one who can multiply loaves and fishes. He is the one that can arrange for 153 large fish, no minnows, no little sprats that need to be thrown back in.

[15:11] He can arrange for those 153 fish to be on the right side of a boat 100 meters away. He is the one who heals others' sicknesses and their diseases.

He is the one who raises himself from the dead after three days never to die. The one, remember in John chapter 1, the one and only son who is himself God and is in closest relationship to the Father. what a friend we have in Jesus. The old hymn says, can we find a friend so faithful, so true, one who knows our sorrows and our cares, who even as our risen Lord is willing to serve us, to call us and to help us.

Fishing can be frustrating all night with nothing to show and so can our efforts to provide for our family.

They can be slow, they can be barely making ends meet, always feeling there is more that we should or that we could do.

[16:47] And some of us know or have known the struggle of stocking a fridge, of dealing with a broken tap, of affording a visit to the doctor.

Where the world and its systems would let us down, where there are no fish to show, do we hear the voice from the shore call to us, friend, the voice that says, do not worry.

Your heavenly Father knows that you need these things, but seek His kingdom, follow me and all these things will be added to you. A voice that calls out to us, cast out your nest again in faith.

But He's also the one who lights the fire, the one who shares His bread, the one who supernaturally provides with a miracle catch, but also provides through these very ordinary means.

The one who gives Himself as Lord of heaven and earth and the one who gives Himself through a community of friends to help us in our need.

[18:01] This is the God-man. This is the Jesus who we are to become like. And so to follow Jesus is to be like Jesus.

To also be the one who calls out friends from the shore to light the fire and share your bread. It sounds simple, yet here is the risen Lord doing that, just that, for His friends.

John in chapter 13, He said, of Jesus, Jesus said, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. John, of course, is talking about Jesus going to the cross, Jesus laying down His life for His friends.

The love of Jesus, only something that God, the Son, could do. Love to the end. And by His death on the cross, we are invited to confess our sins, to put our faith in Him and to follow Him.

And if that is news to you this morning, that is good news. Jesus loves you. Jesus died for you and calls you to follow Him.

[19:22] Also in that very same chapter, John talking about Jesus loving to the end, he also said what it was to follow Jesus.

Jesus said, a new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

And by this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. And so this final recap story is Jesus, the Master, showing the disciples what practical friendship and love looks like. And the Master has much for each of us to do. You see, each one of us is called to friendship with Him over a lifetime of service.

And not all paths, not all our paths following Jesus are going to look the same. And we are going to listen in on Jesus' call on Peter along with getting a hint of what is going to happen to the Apostle John as well.

[20:37] So first, let's listen in as we follow Jesus and Peter as they are walking along the shore here. Let's listen in to what their exchange is.

Verse 15. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? Yes, Lord, he said, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Well, Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me?

He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and you went where you wanted, but when you were old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

[21:54] Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, follow me.

Peter was the first of the seven to reach the shore. He didn't want to wait to haul the fish in. He wanted to get to Jesus. But I wonder as he waded closer and closer through the water that he noticed the already burning coals of the fire on the shoreline.

And if those coals gave him a flashback of that night that he failed to be a friend to Jesus. You see, the last time burning coals were mentioned by John in his gospel, it was the night that Jesus was betrayed.

the night his friends fled, the night he was arrested, the night he was brought before an illegal trial of the Jewish leaders.

And Peter followed from a distance and when that trial was happening at the high priest's courtyard, Peter was there from a distance warming himself and his hands on a fire of coals outside the high priest's courtyard as Jesus was being tried.

[23 : 21] Peter said, Lord, they might all abandon you, but not I. I will never deny you. But we know from our own weak hearts it's only Jesus that truly loves to the end.

You see, Peter's love failed at a critical point. Peter denied Jesus around the coals three times in one night.

And so here we have this three-fold questioning now of Peter. Do you love me from Jesus?

And each of the three times is to cut open again the wound that Peter carries for his three denials. Why?

Why would Jesus the friend cut open that wound? Well, so that the self-inflicted wound that Peter carries with him can be properly dressed and properly stitched by a master physician.

[24 : 35] Jesus cuts the wound three times, one for each denial. Each cut is to replace regret with restoration, to replace failure with calling.

And healing comes from each of those three times that Peter responds with, you know that I do. And each reply from Jesus of feed and care for the sheep all brings healing and restoration and leads to the end of verse 19, those last two words, follow me.

You see, love for Jesus means loving like Jesus. Following Jesus means being a friend like Jesus. Jesus and so Peter, for Peter, that means feeding the sheep like Jesus did.

Jesus is the good shepherd. And so Peter here is called to pastor the flock, the lambs of verse 15, the sheep of 16 and 17.

He is to feed them from the word and to care for them. Now we can feel the hurt of Peter in verse 17.

[25 : 57] Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time. But I think it's important to think through what this hurt is. I don't think it's hurt because of Jesus but because of his recollection of his own sin.

The hurt comes from sin. The healing comes from Jesus. We might fall and cut ourselves badly but to plaster it up ourselves or to go to an amateur physician will leave a scar.

The deep cuts need the master surgeon to apply his skill in making them right. And so the cutting from the hands of our friend Jesus makes neat our mess and leaves a glorious mark not an ugly scar.

So do you take the questions of Jesus by the conviction of his spirit seriously? The questions that you hear from him do you love me?

And when the hurt of your sin is there do you mourn? And are you hurt over your own sin? As you delve deeper into anger in your soul towards the brother in Christ who you can't face do you hear the spirit of Christ this morning asking do you love me?

[27 : 21] what's in your heart what's on your lips yes Lord well the Lord says show me feed my sheep care for my flock light my fires welcome my servants share your bread if you love me serve if you love me care love one another with what I have given you and have called you to you see Jesus is not cruel the wounds of sin we carry they're not delivered by his hand but in his control they can be restitched in his kindness ultimately our life of service leads to some kind of destiny and that destiny will be on Jesus terms not on yours first 18 feeding the sheep would lead

Peter to being led away by others to his death church tradition has it that is his hands were stretched out because like his savior he died on a Roman cross John's gospel John writes here probably after Peter's death so John can look back in this epilogue and show that it was all part of the master's plan to glorify God Peter's death but Lord you might ask with Peter in verse 21 what about someone else's destiny or what about me what do you have in store for me Lord in this life of service let's read verse 20 to 24 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them this was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and said Lord who is going to betray you when Peter saw him he asked Lord what about him

Jesus answered if I want him to remain alive until I return what is that to you you must follow me because of this the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die but Jesus did not say that he would not die he only said if I want him to remain alive until I return what is that to

you so they're walking along and Peter's pointing back at the disciple whom Jesus loved and this is an enigmatic character who's never named in the gospel but pops up at key points the disciple whom Jesus loved and the consensus is that this is a reference to the apostle John the author of this gospel one of the sons of Zebedee one of Peter's fishing partners now John is writing towards the end of the first century and he outlived Peter by many years so rumors begin to circulate that this disciple is never going to die he's going to stay alive until

Jesus returns so John in verse 23 is setting the record straight that's not actually what Jesus said but the key for us is actually verse 22 why is it that one path following Jesus leads to a shortened life and martyrdom and another path seemingly to a long life what does Jesus say in verse 22 what is that to you you must follow me listen to Jesus with both ears not with one ear directed towards what others are being called to he is the master and friend who has called you your call is individual how he blesses gifts and extends or shortens the life of another in their service to him that's all in his masterful hands thankfully in the end both

Peter and John are loved by the Lord both are believers both live out faithful lives of service Peter worries about the future for his friends and his business partner John but he need not know the details he needs not to know how it will pan out that of the three fishermen Peter James and John it was James that would die first in just a few years in Acts chapter 12 recorded in the book of Acts by the sword Peter at that point would miraculously escape taken out of prison by an angel and John himself would live a long life until the end of the century you see to be a follower of Jesus is to walk a very uncertain path but with a very certain friend we do not know when he will call us home we do not know how we will extend or shorten our ministry or our service of him or our service of others or what may come tomorrow but we know that we follow him the servant king the god man our lord and our brother do do you love him then you must follow me is what he says and this is really the final bit the invitation of verse 25

[33 : 25] Jesus did many other things as well if every one of them were written down I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written this is the best ending to the best epilogue ever the epilogue has given us one more story it shown us Jesus to be the risen friend and God man forever Jesus on the shore still making a meal for his friends from a miraculous catch of fish and calling them to follow him and each one is called each one to a different path with all paths leading to glory in his masterful hands you can see John could never capture in pen all that Jesus did or said or impacted during his time they're short the 21 chapters but the books of

Jesus are still being written each born again believer continues the story of what Jesus is doing and what he has done the life of Christ through his church through his people is being worked out in his followers in you and in I you are the continuation of this story carrying out his work in the world the epilogue does not end so follow him today be a friend tend to the sheep help to write the books of Jesus that are going to fill the earth this is his open epilogue that will continue into eternity who knows some of those beside you might even remain alive until his return but what is that to you you must follow him let's pray our father we thank you that you sent

Jesus to be our friend to be our savior to be our master and lord forgive us father for when we are not a friend to Jesus not a friend to one another help us to follow afresh to rest in the hands of the master to learn from him to be a blessing help us to follow closely all the days that you have given us for your glory and for our good amen thank you
Ralph just as we honoring ancestor vos my believe me