

# 'Feed my sheep!'

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, Kate.

Great. Well, as we come to the end of John's Gospel, we read, well, we heard earlier when K-May prayed! that John wrote these things down.

In the end of chapter 20, Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book, but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So as we come to the end of John's eyewitness account of Jesus' life, we see that John wrote these things down so that we may believe and so that we may have life.

But what does it actually look like for us to believe this morning and to go on believing? You see, I think this is the reason why John didn't end his Gospel at chapter 20.

[ 1 : 09 ] I think he wants us to understand what this life now looks like. And I don't know where you're coming from this morning, but is there any more important question that we could be considering?

Because as John puts it, believing leads to life. A life that starts now and will never end.

A life with real purpose and meaning. A life that not even death can take away. And I think we all have this inbuilt desire for life.

We are hungry for life. We have a hunger that needs to be filled. And we try and fill that hunger for life in different ways. Maybe it's that career, that success at school, or that person we want to spend the rest of our lives with.

Perhaps supporting that football team, playing that sport, that holiday we always wanted to go on. Many of these are good things, but if we look for them for our ultimate purpose and joy, our life, you'll realise that you'll ultimately feel let down.

[ 2 : 25 ] People let us down. Football teams lose. Holidays don't last forever. The pursuit of success is never ending.

One of the most successful, well, the most successful Olympian of all time, Michael Phelps, 28 Olympic medals, said this after many Olympics.

He said, I was always hungry, hungry. I always wanted more. I wanted to push myself really to see what my max was.

But really, after every Olympics, I think I fell into a major state of depression. Even he, one of the most successful people, was desperate for life.

So, if life is not found in these things, where is it found? Well, in this broken world where we're often left feeling hungry, unfulfilled, longing for something more, John's passage today, I think, gives us the answer of how we can be fed, how we can fill that longing, how we can have that life through believing.

[ 3 : 46 ] So, what does it look like for us to believe? Well, firstly, believers recognise Jesus is the Lord.

Take a look with me if you've got your Bible open, down at the text. So, Jesus has revealed himself again to his disciples after he's risen from the dead. And at this point, Peter in verse 3 says, I'm going out to fish.

Do you want to come with me? So, him and the other disciples who are there, they go out fishing, but they catch nothing.

How would you feel at that point? You've been working hard all night, and you have nothing to show for it. I know I'd be feeling pretty dissatisfied, pretty frustrated.

I'd certainly be feeling hungry, especially as we'd caught nothing to eat. Yet, it's at this moment, as day is breaking, Jesus comes on the scene, although they don't yet recognise him.

[ 4 : 55 ] Verse 5, Jesus calls out to them, Friends, haven't you any fish? He's not asking them because he is hungry, but I think because he wants to highlight their problem.

The problem of their fruitless labours, their hunger. Just like how we have this dissatisfaction and hunger in life that is meant to point us to the problem of where we're looking for life.

The answer is, of course, no. They don't have anything to eat. And so it's into this desperate situation that Jesus tells his disciples to cast the net onto the other side, to take a change in their life, if you like.

It seems like a ridiculous request. These are experienced fishermen. They've been labouring all night at the best time to catch fish. Why should they listen to his advice?

But they do listen and obey his command. And the result is astonishing. Verse 6, He said, throw your net on the right side.

[ 6 : 11 ] And when they did, they were unable to haul in the net because of the large number of fish. You see, it's a miraculous catch. Jesus abundantly meets their every need.

Makes their labours fruitful. And it's at this point in verse 7 that John, who's writing this, said to Peter, It is the Lord.

You see, it was in response to this miraculous catch of fish that John realised that no one else could be behind it. Although Jesus was in the distance, a foggy kind of picture, 100 metres in the distance, he recognised this work was something only Jesus.

could be behind. Only the Lord God himself could do. The work of Jesus himself. It is the Lord. And I think the point for us is this.

After all we've seen in John's eyewitness account up to this point, we should be able to have this very same realisation. belief and life starts and continues by first recognising and professing that Jesus really is the Lord.

[ 7 : 28 ] actually this is something that the disciples who are named here in verse 2 had all professed earlier in the Gospel. If we want this life that Jesus offers, we need to have this same realisation.

So the first question I want to ask us is have you realised and recognised this yourself? Jesus is not just a nice moral teacher.

He's not just an important historical leader. He's not even just a prophet. He is the Lord.

He is one with the God who made the universe. He is the source of life. He is the one who can change you, your life from one of hunger to one of abundant life.

This truth has important implications because if we really recognise that Jesus is the Lord, that he is the one who gives life, who makes us fruitful in our labours, then we will realise that without Jesus we can do nothing.

[ 8 : 48 ] Without Jesus there is no life. Just as Jesus' disciples laboured all night and found nothing, if we go about our lives without Jesus we will be left empty.

Do you realise this morning that without Jesus you can't have that life you long for? That the reason we're often hungry, always looking for more is because Jesus is the only one who can meet that need.

And I think it's very much a danger even for those of us who have been at church a long time. It's very easy for us to say Jesus is Lord and then live the rest of our lives as if it's ultimately down to us and what we do for Jesus and somehow that his mission is dependent on us.

But if you are a believer here this morning, you need to remember that life does not come from what you do for Jesus but from who he is and what he has done for us.

He's the one who gives life. He's the shepherd who will gather and feed his sheep. He is the Lord.

Isn't that a freeing and life-giving truth to remember this morning?

[ 10 : 05 ] But secondly, believers don't just recognise that Jesus is the Lord but believers come to Jesus to be fed.

Take a look down with me at verse 7. I don't know how you would respond to seeing this miraculous catch of fish but Peter gives us I think a response that shows us how we're meant to respond.

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 round him for he had taken it off and jumped into the water.

Now, there's a picture of someone jumping into the water. It's quite a bold thing to do. Now, but I think it's striking. I think it's striking this response because this is not long after Peter had disowned

Jesus three times and now Peter wants as quickly as possible run, run to Jesus to be with his Lord, to see him, to talk with him, to meet him.

Can you imagine how much Peter's betrayal would have hurt Jesus? Can you imagine you turn your back on one of your best friends when they need you most?

[ 11 : 41 ] Or, to put it another way, imagine you said something really bad to someone really important, perhaps a teacher or a boss or perhaps even more so, someone like the king.

and now they invite you to come and have dinner with them. How would you feel in that moment seeing that person has invited you when you know you have said something really bad against them, you've hurt them?

I think you'd probably feel pretty embarrassed, right? Probably ashamed to even come near them. Probably unsure whether you should come after all. And I think this should be how you'd have thought Peter would have felt, right?

He's turned his back on Jesus. Sure. But, why can Peter now confidently come running to Jesus? Well, I think John includes a little detail for us to understand why. You see, as Peter recognised who Jesus was, he wrapped his outer garment over him before jumping into the water.

[ 12 : 56 ] And John's really big on details. The last time we saw something like this, I think John's trying to refer us to is when Jesus himself took off his outer garment to wash his disciples' feet.

He took on the role of a slave. to make his disciples clean. He's pointing to how Jesus would die for his sheep, his disciples on the cross.

The point is this, I think, that Peter now realises that this Lord, the Son of God, came for people like him, came to willingly die on a cross to take his guilt, his shame upon himself to make him clean.

He has seen Jesus' astonishing love for him, that he no needs to worry about the past anymore because Jesus has taken his nakedness and clothed him.

Now, of course, Peter is upset by what he's done. We see that in verse 17. After three times, Jesus reminds him, do you love me? Peter is really hurt and grieved.

[ 14 : 13 ] He sees the sorrow of his sin. But yet, Peter is confident that he can still run to Jesus, that he's confident that Jesus came for sinners like him and so boldly comes to him to be fed.

So can I ask, do you have the same confidence this morning to boldly come to Jesus, that Jesus came for sinners like you and me? Jesus invited them to come and eat with him.

But notice in verse 9, when they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals, there with fish on it and some bread. Jesus already had the food to eat.

He wasn't relying on what they had. He had exactly what they needed to be fed. and verse 12, after they got there, Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast.

Jesus invited his disciples to come and eat with him, to feast, to break from the fast of that lifeless toil and to feast on the food that he gives.

[ 15 : 33 ] Jesus. Dear friends, this morning, the same invitation goes out to you and me to come to Jesus to be fed, to feast on what Jesus has done for us so that our sins could be forgiven and that we can really know him and therefore really live, free from the fear of judgment, free from the fear of death, free from fear of the past.

free to really live. Do you want this life? Come to Jesus to be fed. What does it look like to come to Jesus to be fed, though, for us today?

Well, throughout John's Gospel, I think it's been made clear that it's through remaining in Jesus' words and feasting on them that life is found.

that is how we are fed. And it's why John says in verse 24 that he wrote down this testimony. He wanted us to be able to hear and see Jesus for ourselves through his testimony.

When we come to the Bible and we see the prophets and their testimony of Jesus, it's then that we are fed. God so if we want to be fed by Jesus, we're going to want to spend time feeding on him through regularly reading or listening to him.

[ 17 : 11 ] As in his word, the Bible, we want to be at church like we are today, to hear his word taught so that we can be fed. We want to make his words the heart of our family life because it's feasting on these words that life is found and food is something that we can't live without.

But I think there's also something I've been challenged by in this. It's very easy to read the Bible and to come to church and miss the point completely. Actually, Jesus said this earlier in John's Gospel.

In chapter 5, he says, you study the Scriptures diligently because you think in them that you have eternal life. it's not in studying the Scriptures themselves that life is found.

But Jesus says, these are the very Scriptures that testify about me. If we want this life, we need to make sure that in all of our studies, in all of our devotions, we are coming back to the person of Jesus himself because he is the one who brings that life.

So, believers recognize Jesus as the Lord. Believers come to Jesus to be fed. But thirdly, believers feed his sheep.

[ 18 : 34 ] After the disciples have been fed by Jesus, and I think that's really important, it comes after they've been fed, Jesus then approaches Peter and he asks him three times, Peter, do you love me?

And Peter says, Lord, you know I love you. And three times, in slightly different ways, but Jesus says to him, feed my sheep.

And I think the point is this, is if you have been fed by me, if you love me, then feed others. You'll want to give this food you have received to others.

you'll want to help build up others in the church, so that they know and love Jesus for themselves, that they have this life. And it's really interesting, because Jesus is saying that he has deliberately chosen to use a humble disciple like Peter, who's someone who knew his sin, knew how he'd fallen away, to be the means for bringing this life-giving message to others.

God and I think it's for this reason, I think it's because he wants us to be blessed through it, he wants us to have this blessing of being able to bring this life we've received to others.

[ 20 : 05 ] Perhaps one way to think of it, when I helped at an after school club many years ago, we would give snacks around, but we would give the responsibility of giving the snacks around to some of the children.

Not because they could do a better job than us, not because we even needed them to do it, but because they got a joy out of being involved in the giving out, the participating and serving others through that.

We have something far better than cups of water and snacks to give out. We have the words of eternal life. life. When you are involved in the work of feeding Jesus sheep through sharing what God is doing in your life, praying for people, getting the Bible open with people, inviting people to our fellowship here, serving behind the scenes at events where the gospel is going out, giving financially to those doing this work, you are participating in the work that feeds people and brings people eternal life.

You are doing the greatest work that anyone in this world could be doing. What a privilege. What a privilege.

So, how are we participating in this work? How can we at St. John's help feed others here in our church family?

[ 21 : 38 ] That's why fellowship time after service and over lunch and things like that is so important. And we also live in a city and a community that needs to be fed.

How can we as a church be better at feeding them? Now, remember, it's not meant to be a burden, but a joy. And perhaps if it is feeling a bit like a burden, it's a reminder that we ourselves are not taking that time to be fed.

what transformed Peter and made him a suitable person to be used to feed Jesus' sheep was that he had personally come and been fed by Jesus himself.

He'd been transformed by him. So, believers recognise Jesus as the Lord, they come to Jesus to be fed, they feed his sheep, and finally, they follow Jesus alone.

After all that Jesus has said to Peter, he says to him in verse 18, very truly I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself, you went where you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

[ 22 : 59 ] Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, follow me. Jesus tells Peter that because he has loved Jesus, he will now begin to follow in his steps.

Just as Jesus came to lay down his life for the sake of his sheep, Peter too will now end up suffering and dying as a testimony to how his life has been transformed by Jesus.

And I think this is important for a few reasons. One, it shows us that having this life that Jesus offers does not mean that we will be absent from suffering, that we will not face suffering.

In fact, far the opposite, we should expect suffering as believers. as we follow Jesus and become like him, love what he loves, live as he lived, work for his work, people won't like us. We may even lose family, friends, career opportunities, comfort, time. But we should not lose heart if these times come because actually it's in following Jesus, becoming like him, even identifying with him in his sufferings that real life is found.

[ 24 : 23 ] And not only this, but we are following the one who, as K-May prayed earlier, who has already gone before us to prepare a place for us, who is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

And if we are following him in his sufferings, we will also follow him to glory. that we will be raised to everlasting life with him.

So may I ask, when surrounded by so many voices and pulls in the world today, calling us to follow them, offering to meet our hunger, will we follow Jesus alone?

Notice the command is not to follow other Christians. After all that Jesus has said to Peter, Peter turns and asks Jesus in verse 21, what about him?

What about John? Is he going to die too? Jesus says in verse 22, essentially, it's none of your business, Peter.

[ 25 : 37 ] You follow me. Now, there's a strong temptation in life to always be comparing ourselves to others. They're a Christian, yet they don't seem to be having the sufferings I'm going through, they seem to be having an easier time, why can't I have that easier time too?

Well, if we have that attitude, then we are in a danger of being left hungry and dissatisfied. because Jesus says how other followers live is none of your business.

You see, we're called to follow Jesus alone. We should compare our lives to him and not to others. He's the standard we should look to. But also, follow Jesus alone.

We should not follow our own idea about who Jesus is. There's a danger of following our emotions or our ideas of who we think Jesus is and thinking what his plans are and therefore being left disappointed when things don't turn out as planned.

I think John highlights this danger in verse 23. Because after Jesus said that what's it to you, what is it if he remains until I return?

[ 27 : 04 ] In verse 22, a rumor spreads. In verse 23, because of this, a rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die.

But Jesus did not say that he would not die, only said if I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? I think John wants to highlight this.

Because one, people then were thinking, well Jesus hasn't yet returned when John was writing. Is therefore, can we really trust John's message?

And John's saying, no, no, don't doubt that. You missed the point. You got it wrong. And what he's doing is he's highlighting the danger of not paying careful attention to Jesus' words.

You see, if we don't pay careful attention, there's a danger we make Jesus into something he's not. We end up following something that's our own creation. You see, we need to take Jesus' words really seriously, to take time to really understand what they mean.

[ 28 : 13 ] Because it's through these words that we are fed, not through some imagination, some picture of who Jesus is. It's only through knowing him that we are fed and we have the life that he offers.

So as we close, will you come to Jesus to be fed? Now, if you want this life that Jesus offers, it's no good just looking at the food.

If you imagine you went to a meal and there was all this fine food put in front of you, would you just sit and look at it? No.

If you want to experience the joy that comes from feasting on that food, you need to take it in, you need to eat it, you need to let it fill you. And it's the same for us, it's no good for us to keep Jesus over there.

if we want to experience the life that he offers, we need to follow him alone, we need to take him in, we need to feed on him and feast on him.

[ 29 : 24 ] We need to follow Jesus and do his work, take his words seriously and put them into practice, just like Peter did, just like John did, and countless followers throughout history have done.

Recognising Jesus is the Lord, coming to Jesus to be fed, getting involved in the work of feeding his sheep, following him alone.

See, only then will we have the power to keep going and keep believing in the face of trials, and only then will we begin to experience the life that we all long for and that life that Jesus offers, a life that starts now and will never end, life with real purpose and meaning, a life that not even death can take away.

Do you want this life? Then can I implore you, believe and keep believing. Recognise Jesus is the Lord, come to Jesus to be fed, feed his sheep, follow him alone.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I just thank you so much for John's testimony here that's written to show us what it looks like to go on believing in the Christian life, how to have this life that we all long for.

[ 31 : 00 ] Father, help us now to take these words to heart, to be nourished by them, to feed on them again later and help us to put them into practice.

If there's areas of our lives that need to change, Lord, to really change them, to see Jesus for who he really is, to come to him, to be fed and to get involved in his work of feeding his sheep.

may you help us to follow him and him alone. In his name we ask. Amen. Thank you so much for helping us through John 21.

I love that sense. You're inadequate, you've got nothing and you come to the one who has everything. He grants you truth, life, forgiveness, food, and you might then go out and sing. We're going to sing together before we share in bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

We're going to sing about the life, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in the words of this song. As the music starts, we'll stand and sing. Amen.