

Fish For Breakfast

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Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0 : 01] Well, let's open our Bibles one more time to the Gospel of John, John chapter 21. We're concluding our series in John's Gospel this morning, if you can believe it.

And so if you would, turn to John chapter 21. If you didn't bring a Bible with you, that's okay. We have Bibles provided for you in the seat backs in front of you. If it's not in front of you, look to your left or to your right.

There ought to be one nearby. But I always encourage you to please have a copy of God's Word open in front of you. I don't want you just to hear it from my voice, through my lips.

I want you to see it with your own eyes on the pages of God's Word. John chapter 21, when you found that, if you would, let's stand together in honor of the reading of God's Word.

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias.

[1 : 02] And he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, called the twin, Nathaniel 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. 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. 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.

[2 : 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. And 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 would the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

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.

[3 : 15] 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. 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. Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had also leaned back against him during the supper and had said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? Jesus said to him, If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me.

[4 : 16] So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die. But if it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?

This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things. And we know that his testimony is true. Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. This is the word of God.

Let's pray once more. Lord, we thank you for your word. And we pray even as we've already sung, God, reveal your glory through the preaching of your word. Would you show us Christ this morning and give us eyes to see, give us hearts to accept and believe what you've written.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. 47 sermons in the Gospel of John. Spread out among 62 Sundays with a break here and there.

[5 : 20] 21 chapters. Some of you probably wish it could go on a bit longer. Many of you are probably wondering what more could possibly be said. Well, if we take John literally here at the ending of this Gospel, he says the world itself can't contain the books that could be written about this man Jesus.

We've seen time and time and time again, haven't we? The example after example after example, story after story after story, written about this man Jesus.

John is trying to get us to see clearly who he is. And he's written with an aim in mind. You ought to know this by now. Chapter 20, verse 31. These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

And that by believing, you may have life in his name. As we bring our series to a close this morning, as we wrap up the Gospel of John, really this shouldn't be many new things to you.

It shouldn't be new information to you. But rather, John's putting the question to us once again, do you believe? Have you gotten the message?

[6 : 36] To that end, he shares two final stories of the person and work of Jesus this morning. This will be our outline. If you're taking notes, this will help you to follow along. We have two final stories of the work of Jesus this morning.

We see Jesus reveals himself to his people. And Jesus restores his people to himself. Jesus reveals himself to his people.

And Jesus restores his people to himself. First, we see here in verses 1 through 14, Jesus once again reveals himself to his people.

All throughout John's Gospel, we've seen him revealing himself, haven't we? Peeling back the layer of who he is. We've seen signs and wonders of what he's done that reveal who he is.

We've heard his own statements, these I am statements revealing who he is. And we've seen the disciples, haven't we, progress in faith, especially as we come to the aftermath of the resurrection of Jesus.

[7 : 39] We see them seeing, beginning to see clearly who Jesus is. Look there with me to verse 1. Jesus has just appeared to his disciples twice already after his resurrection, once without Thomas and then a second time with Thomas present.

And now John says that after this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. And John says he revealed himself in this way.

The disciples were going fishing. Peter, ever the vocal leader of the disciples, says, I'm going fishing, who wants to come? And it says Thomas and Nathaniel of Cana, the sons of Zebedee, James and John, and two others came with him, that's seven in all, which would not have been an unusual thing, right?

Peter, James, and John were all fishermen when Jesus called them to follow him. They would have been used to a long night out on the sea fishing. But what was unusual for them this evening was that after a night full of fishing all night long, they had nothing to show for it.

And John says they came back and they had no fish all night long, casting nets, casting nets, casting nets, and nothing. Which wouldn't be strange if I was in the boat, right?

[8 : 55] That's how it normally goes when I go fishing. But these men, these were experienced fishermen. They weren't fishing with a rod and a hook and a worm. They were casting nets. They

were expecting to haul in a number of fish.

But John says the night came and went. Morning was approaching and they caught nothing. Very unusual. That's not the only unusual thing that happened, was it?

And to make matters worse, there on the shore, some strange man calls out to them, children, have you caught any fish? Now maybe I just imagine this, that maybe they had a more gracious tone than I would have had after a night without sleep, without anything to show for it.

But they answered and said, no, we have no fish. And so the strange man on the shore tells them, well, try casting the net on the right side of the boat. And whether out of despair or desperation or defeat, I don't know, they cast the net on the other side.

And all of a sudden, just imagine it, after a night of fruitless labor, all of a sudden they go to pull in the net empty as before, and this time it won't budge.

[10:04] It's weighted. It's full. It's full of fish. After all their efforts, that whole night they listened to the man on the shore. They tossed the net off the right side.

And this time they can't even pull the net up into the boat. It won't budge. Something unusual and incredible has happened. And John says that it was here at this point, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, he realized who this mysterious man on the shore must be.

And he proclaims. He says, it is the Lord. He's back. Just imagine the joy and the excitement of that moment. The risen Lord Jesus is right there on the shore, just a hundred yards away.

He's back. He's come to visit us once again. One of the joys of being a father of kids that are still young is that they're still excited to see me.

Often. A lot of the time. Right? And I love going to the preschool pickup line at their school and seeing the kids just charge out of the door and run into the arms of their parents.

[11:17] And some of them just leap in for a hug. Other ones, they jump off. They fly off the curb. And they land in their parents' arms. They're excited to be reunited with the ones who love them most.

And we've seen, haven't we, throughout John's gospel, no disciple is more like a preschooler than Peter. Right? And John says, it's the Lord. As soon as he tells Peter, it's the Lord.

What does Peter do? He puts on his clothes. He was stripped down for work. He wraps himself up. And he tosses himself in the water. He says he swam a hundred yards to go see Jesus, to be reunited with the one who loves him most.

And when he got there, he found that Jesus had prepared a fire with fish and bread. And he told them, go bring the fish that you just caught and come and let's have breakfast.

Now, this is an aside, right? But Peter must have been either incredibly strong or just jacked up on adrenaline from seeing the Lord because he just swims a hundred yards.

[12:21] And then at the command of Jesus, verse 11 says that he got back up in the boat and he hauled that heavy net ashore full of 153 large fish. And although there were so many, John, he points out this small detail, the net was not torn.

So right there on the beach, reunited once again with bread and fish, and I can only imagine with joy and laughter, the disciples enjoyed a little fish for breakfast with Jesus.

John tells us in verse 12 that none of the disciples, not one, none of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They all knew it was the Lord.

See, we see a little bit of their progress in the faith here, don't we? They knew it was the Lord. What a moment. But you know, as I read this and studied this text, as I thought about this event, as I imagined it in my mind, I asked the question and I wondered, maybe you asked the same question as you read this text.

How in the world did they know it was the Lord? How were they so confident that it was the Lord Jesus? Confident enough for John, a hundred yards away in the dark of the early morning, to say it's the Lord?

[13:39] Confident enough for Peter to throw himself in the water and go swim up to the shore. How did they know it was the Lord? Well, it could have been that they're just so familiar with him, having spent three years together, eating meals.

They ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner with Jesus. They had the opportunity to observe his mannerisms, his personality, how he broke the bread when he distributed it to the masses and fed the thousands.

And they had eaten bread and wine at the last supper before the death of Christ. There's familiarity in the breaking of bread. It could have been that he revealed himself to them in the way that he served them.

And no one served them like Jesus. And after a long night of fishing, here was Jesus preparing a fire, making breakfast, preparing the fish, and setting the table.

He revealed himself in his persistent desire to serve them. This was the master that washed their feet. The Son of Man, who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[14:46] They knew it was him by his service. That still doesn't explain, does it, how John knew it was him from a hundred yards away. How Peter was so confident it was him from a hundred yards away.

There's one more reason why I think they knew it must be him, even before arriving on the shore. They knew it was him because something similar had happened to them and with them and another encounter with Jesus earlier in another gospel, but with a few key differences.

Luke chapter 5, verses 1 through 11. You can turn there if you like, but what I want you to notice is that these two stories are so similar.

In fact, they're so similar that critics of the Bible say that this is just the same story repurposed and told in different places and in different ways, but I think that that misses the point here.

Often times, when we're studying God's word, if you see two similar stories, two similar occurrences, the point, the message, is in the similarities, but also in the differences between the stories.

[16:00] So look here, Luke chapter 5. Luke tells the story of Jesus calling the first disciples to follow him. This was the very beginning of their relationship.

This was the very first time they ever heard the voice of Jesus. It's the beginning of Jesus revealing himself to them. Now, I want you to listen and see if you can spot the differences here.

Luke chapter 5. Luke says that Jesus was teaching at the side of the lake Gennesaret and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets and he got into one of the boats which happened to belong to a man named Simon who we know is Peter. And he taught the people from the boat and when he finished, listen to this, he said to Peter, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets.

And when they had done this, Luke says, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking. And they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them and they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink.

[17:14] But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken.

And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men.

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. It's interesting, isn't it? This event, obviously, it would have been seared into their memories.

This was one of those life-changing foundational events. And so when it happens again here in John chapter 21, of course they knew it was Jesus. Why? Because this was the exact way he had first revealed himself to them.

What was the lesson for them back at the beginning? Come follow me. Come follow me. and I will make you fishers of men.

[18:22] Well, what are they doing here in John 21? They're still catching fish. Could it be? What's the lesson here? Could it be that Jesus is saying, guys, the time has come.

The plan of salvation has been accomplished. I have come. I have lived. I have died. I have risen. The time has come for you to stop catching fish and go out and begin catching men.

Could it be a lesson for them? I have sent you out to proclaim forgiveness of sins in my name and here you are still catching fish. You've gone back to your old life. You've gone back to life as usual, as if the resurrection didn't happen.

Don't you know the resurrection changes everything? And now it's time for you. If you've seen me clearly for who I am, it's time for you to go share that message with others.

It's time for you to go and be a fisher of men. You see, if you have seen Jesus for who he is, if he's revealed himself to you, you don't just go back to your old way of life.

[19 : 29] How could you? You have a repurposed identity in Christ. The resurrection of Jesus, when you see it with eyes of faith, changes everything about who you are.

We are now sent out as fishers of men with an unbreakable net, the finished work of the gospel of Jesus Christ and a Lord that commands you to cast.

Of course, there's a problem, isn't there? When you hear that command that we're called to go be fishers of men, there's a problem. I've heard each of you, many of you, express this to me when I've spoken with you about our call and the task of personal evangelism, that you and I are called, each one of us as followers of Christ, we are called to go be fishers of men.

We are called to go share the gospel with our friends and our family members and our co-workers and our neighbors. We come across a problem. Do you know what it is? We feel so insufficient for that call, don't we?

Who are we to go and proclaim this gospel message? We know that we're sinful, we're insufficient. Who are we? Which is why the second point this morning is so encouraging for sinners like us.

[20 : 52] Jesus reveals himself to his people and second, Jesus restores his people to himself. If anyone was disqualified from useful service to the Lord, it was Peter.

Right? It was Peter. You remember Peter and the size of his failure three times. He denied the Lord. He was unwilling to associate with the Lord.

He wanted nothing to do with the cost of following Jesus. I don't know him. I don't know him. I don't know him. And now as he sees the Lord on the shore, I mean, he's excited to see him, but he has to be carrying just a load of guilt.

Right? And there's this unresolved tension here. But what Peter learns in this moment, and it's such an important lesson for us as well, is that his status before the Lord and his usefulness for the Lord's ministry is not in his goodness.

It's not in his strength. It's not in his faithfulness, but in the faithfulness of Christ. Look there to verse 15.

[22 : 08] John says, When they'd finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? You've boasted before about the strength of your love.

What about now? Do you love me? And he said, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said to him, Feed my lambs. So he said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And again, he replied a second time, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And he said, Tend my sheep. So he said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And he says, Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. You can see right into my heart and know the truth. You know that I love you.

And Jesus said, Feed my sheep. Why? Why does he ask him this question three times? Oh, you remember, three times previously, Peter had denied him.

[23 : 09] I don't know him. I don't know him. I don't know him. And now Jesus, three times, asks him, Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? And now three times, Peter is able to respond to the Lord, Yes, I love you.

Yes, I love you. Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. This is Jesus graciously restoring his servant to himself and to his service.

And if you've ever failed the Lord, and if you've ever denied him, like Peter has done here, and we all have, we should take heart.

Now this is a clear illustration of the heart of Jesus towards sinners like us. You know, we were traveling this past week, and on the way, we listened to the kids' version of Pilgrim's Progress. I forget what it's called. Littlest Pilgrim, Big Journey, something like that. John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. You know, you know the classic book. And we got to the point where Christian, the pilgrim, as he's journeying on his way to the celestial city.

[24 : 22] On his way to be reunited with the king who's called him there, called him to this journey. He's on his way, and he comes, and he meets Apollyon. And Apollyon begins to accuse Christian.

And he says, you've been faithless. You've denied the Lord. You've swerved from the path. You've been lazy. You've been prideful. He piles on accusation after accusation after accusation.

And Christian responds, I love this. He says, all this is true and much more that you left out. But the prince whom I serve and honor is merciful and ready to forgive.

Now we often sing when Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within. Upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.

The Lord restored Peter not only to himself but also to tremendous service, to tremendous responsibility. As we read through the book of Acts, Peter becomes a pillar of the early church.

[25 : 36] He tells him here this responsibility three times. Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep. Does the Lord care for his sheep? Of course he does. This is no small responsibility that he's entrusting to Peter.

Feed my sheep. What was the qualification? What claim? What right did Peter have to do this service? It's not in his goodness, is it? It's in the goodness and the restoration and the grace that he's received by the ministry of Christ Jesus.

And the good news for us, church, is that this restorative ministry of Jesus. It's not just for Peter. It's not just for shepherds. This is the work of Christ for all of his people.

Jesus restores his people to himself. You know, there's not a person in here who can honestly say that you have perfectly followed the Lord.

Every one of us in our own way has denied him just like Peter. But as we grow to understand the heart of Christ towards sinners like us, the more that he reveals himself to us so that we see him clearly for who he is, we won't hide our sin from him like Adam.

[26 : 58] And we won't try and put on some appearance of false holiness. We'll run to him with our sin like Peter. That's exactly what he wants us to do.

You know, it's interesting, isn't it? The first time that Jesus filled the nets and he called Peter to follow him, do you remember the response? What did he say? I'm sinful.

Depart from me. I'm a sinful man, O Lord. That was just after a glimpse of the holiness and divinity of Christ. That was a short glimpse of the identity of Jesus. But here, after three years spent with the Lord, and here, after what had to be the very pinnacle, the very peak of his sin, what does he do?

He jumps out and swims to the Lord for restoration. Now, we should know that both responses are correct, right? As sinful men and women on one side, we ought to stand in reverent fear of the holiness of God and what that means for us as sinners.

We should never treat our sin lightly. We should never misuse and abuse the grace of God, the kindness of God as an excuse or a license to sin.

[28 : 09] And yet, if we understand the gospel, and the more we understand the heart of Christ, that Christ Jesus came and died to take away our sin from us, that he came here for sinners like us, that he died to restore sinners like us to fellowship with God, we ought to cast ourselves like Peter into the depths of his heart of grace towards sinners like us.

The more clearly we see him, the more quickly we'll run to him for grace and restoration and say, Lord, use me however you see fit. Jesus gives us one final lesson to Peter here in verses 18 through 23.

He shares with him how he will die. Which, you know, that seems like, that seems a little strange at first glance, doesn't it? But what he's doing is he's sharing with Peter that this ministry, following me, fishing for men, shepherding my sheep, will come at great cost.

Following me will come at great cost. Look what he says, 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.

And 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. We don't see Peter's death in the scriptures, but tradition and church history, historical records indicate that Peter was put to death in Rome at the hands of the emperor Nero.

[30 : 02] As part of a widespread persecution against Christians, Peter was crucified. But at his request, he was crucified upside down because his testimony was that he would not be worthy to be put to death in the same way as the Lord Jesus Christ.

His hands were stretched out and he was carried where he did not want to go. But it's amazing, isn't it? Peter was finally willing to bear public shame for the sake of Christ.

He was finally willing to associate with this man Jesus whatever the cost may be. He was restored and then some. John says that Peter, he turned and he saw the disciple whom Jesus loved

following them.

The one who had leaned back against him during the supper. This is John. And Peter said, well, what about this man? If that's what it's going to cost me, what's it going to cost him?

If that's what you have planned for me as I follow you, what about him? And John said that Jesus replies to him, well, if it's my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?

[31 : 15] You follow me. Do you get the message? You know, apparently this started a bit of a rumor that John wasn't going to die and that he would instead live and remain until the return of Christ but John sets us straight and he said that's not what Jesus said, that's not the point.

What's the point? The point for Peter and for us, church, is you follow me. Don't get hung up on whatabouts.

don't get tripped up on comparing callings with this guy or that. If you have seen Jesus clearly for who he is, if you have been restored as a broken sinner, restored to fellowship with God himself by the blood of Christ, your call, whatever the cost, you follow me.

And for some, that may mean going into dangerous places, proclaiming the name of Christ, being persecuted, even giving your life for the cause of Christ.

That may be the path that God has for you or it may be that the Lord has called you to pray and to share, to give generously to kingdom causes, to faithfully teach your family about Jesus, to teach your children and your neighbors to evangelize your friends.

[32 : 42] It may be that the Lord has called you to live to a ripe old age and die as an old man or woman faithful to Christ. Or it may be that the Lord causes you to stretch your hands out on a cross and die for the sake of Christ.

What difference does it make for you? The call is you follow Christ. And if Jesus is who this book has proclaimed him to be, then church he is worth it.

Amen? Amen? John ends this gospel with this fairy tale ending. Don't you love this? He says, this is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things and who has written these things and we know that his testimony is true.

There are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

That sounds at first like an exaggeration, doesn't it? And maybe it is, but if this man Jesus is who John has told us that he is, remember John chapter one?

[33 : 56] It says, all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. All things, all the books that have ever been written on geology, on ecology, on astrology, on ornithology, all of it rightly understood is theology, is Christology.

All of it is from him and for him, Paul says, to him be the glory forever. Christ Jesus made it all. John says another wonder of wonders is that the one who made it all stepped down into his creation in order to redeem it.

How many books could we fill? To tell the stories of Christ? How many books could be written to tell the stories of men and women who have been given eyes to see him for who he is?

How many books can be written to share the stories of restoration? Even in this room, sinners reconciled to God by the blood of Christ. How many stories can be written through the ages of the church after years and years and years and years?

I don't think John is exaggerating church. all the shelves of the world would not be enough to contain the books that can be written of this man, Jesus Christ. And we have all of eternity to explore the wonders of the grace of God towards us who believe.

[35 : 25] But this book, the gospel according to John, was written with one purpose in mind, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

Have you gotten the message? Do you believe He is who He's claimed to be? Let's pray. Lord, as we close this book, we thank You and we praise You again for Your Word.

We thank You and we praise You again for the person and work of Jesus. And we pray, Lord, it's my desire that this church, Father, that You would make us a people who see You clearly.

Would You reveal Yourself to us more clearly that we might love You and honor You and worship You. And Lord, would You lead us to be quick to confess our sin to You and quick to run to You for restoration.

And Lord, would You make us quick to share about You and that others might come to know You as we do. We love You, Lord. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.