

John 21

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[0 : 00] If you're looking in the Pew Bibles, it's page 907. We're taking a little break tonight from our series in 1 Samuel to look at this chapter in John.

It's some of Jesus' last words to his disciples on earth before he would leave them and return to the Father in heaven.

So John chapter 21, I'm going to read verses 1 through 22. And here we go. After this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, called the twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, I'm going fishing. They said to him, we'll 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?

[1 : 04] 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. 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, a hundred fifty-three of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. Now none of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. And so with the fish, this was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[2 : 05] When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to them, yes, Lord. He said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

He said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, feed my sheep.

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 also had leaned back against him during the supper, and had said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?

[3 : 10] 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. Well, this is a time of year where we are looking back and looking forward. It's a time of year where some of you may be preparing to graduate and move on. Others of you may be preparing to leave town, or other of you may have friends in either one of those categories. But even if nothing else is changing in your life, even if you're just staying here and have no plans for anything to change, it's a good time, it's a good opportunity to look back and look forward. Tomorrow, I hope to take a half day for what I call a personal retreat that I do twice or three times a year. I usually just go for a long bike ride, take a Bible and a journal, and think about what has the last six months been like?

[4 : 16] What has God been teaching me? What's changed? And then what are my priorities looking forward? And I keep my notes from when I've done this over the last few years, and it's interesting to see how much can change, even just in the course of six months, in my own life, in my family, in the church.

So, anyway, so this evening we're looking at this passage at the end of John's Gospel, where Jesus is preparing his disciples for the future, but the way he does that is by reminding them of the past. Now, some scholars have actually questioned whether this chapter belongs in the Gospel of John. They point to the end of chapter 20. At the end of chapter 20, if you read verse 31, he tells us the purpose of his book.

He says, These things are written so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in his name. And so some people have said, Well, that sounds like a conclusion. You know, the end.

Believe in Jesus, have life in his name. You know, chapter 21, it seems like, maybe somebody else added that later on, sort of an appendix that's anticlimactic. But actually, chapter 21 is really important.

[5 : 31] If chapter 20 focuses on Jesus revealing himself to his disciples after his resurrection, and assuring them that he's really alive, and that he's really their Lord and God, chapter 21 is him preparing them to go out into the world with that message.

And you know, that's really the purpose of the Bible and the Gospels, the Bible in general, and the New Testament Gospels in particular. It's not only to assure us that Jesus really is the Messiah and the Son of God, but also to equip us and prepare us to live a life in this world of faithfully following and walking with him.

So the way he does this, the way Jesus does this in this chapter, is he reminds his disciples of three events that have gone on in the past.

As we go through this chapter, Jesus sort of replays these events in their minds. So it's sort of like if you watch the highlights of a baseball game on SportsCenter, and you are reminded of that home run in the second inning, and then that, you know, great play that the defender made in the fifth inning that kept the game, you know, one way or the other, and then in the bottom of the ninth inning, how the Yankees lost, or whatever.

Okay, so, sorry, I'm from Boston. My loyalties are revealed. I know some of you are New York fans. You have to forgive me. Because you're, you know, because we're Christians, and we have to forgive each other.

[7 : 06] All right. But the point is, I'm getting distracted. It's like the end of, it's also like the end of a movie that sort of gathers up the various strands of the plot lines together.

This is what's going on here. So let me, so you might be wondering, what in the world is he saying? Let me show you. Okay, Jesus teaches us three lessons. Looking back on three events. So first lesson, abide in Jesus.

The story begins with Simon Peter and the disciples going fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They're, they are fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

Now, verse one through three, it's fine that they're going fishing, but you know, if you read these verses, they seem a little bit bored. Sort of aimless. Simon Peter says, oh, let's go fishing.

And they're like, yeah, sure, we'll go with you. I mean, you know, it's a reasonable thing to do. They need to eat. That's fine. But they're also powerless, right?

[8 : 05] They fish all night and they catch nothing. Now, that would have reminded the disciples of something that happened at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

When Jesus first called Peter and James and John, the sons of Zebedee to be his disciples, they had fished all night on the Sea of Galilee and caught nothing.

It's a story that's found in Luke chapter five. And here they are in the same situation again. But then what had happened in Luke chapter five?

You can turn back there if you want to. Jesus had come along. And he said, go out into the deep and let out your nets for a catch. And Peter protested.

Peter's like, Jesus, we're a professional fisherman. You know, we sort of know what we're doing here. But he said, okay, fine, I'll do it. So they go out, let down the nets. They're full of fish.

[9 : 04] Again, what happens here? Same kind of thing. Cast the net on the right side of the boat. You'll find some. They throw down the net. It's full of fish. And so they say, it's the Lord.

They knew who it was. Now, both times, the disciples were working hard apart from Jesus and they yielded nothing. And then they listened to Jesus' word and obeyed his voice.

And their nets were full to overflowing. Jesus is reminding them and he's reminding us that we're dependent on him. Now, of course, in a general sense, all of us are dependent on God as God's creatures.

There's all, I mean, even the fact that the universe exists and the law of gravity doesn't suddenly change from moment to moment so that when you're driving down the highway or riding the bus, everything doesn't just start colliding with each other because the regular, regular patterns of the universe are chaotic, right?

God sustains the whole universe day by day. He sustains our brain, the system that has the blood flowing through our body. There's all kinds of things that we don't even think about that we depend on for our very life and health and safety that God sustains us every day.

[10 : 28] In a general sense, we're all dependent on God as his creatures. But in a more particular sense, Jesus is reminding us that we're dependent on him as Jesus' disciples. Jesus had said in John chapter 15, I am the vine and you are the branches.

If you abide in me, you will bear much fruit. But apart from me, you can do nothing at all. Now what does it look like to abide in Jesus?

Jesus talks about abiding in his word, letting his word sink into our hearts and shape our lives, abiding in his love, resting in the assurance that he has loved us and laid down his life for us on the cross and nothing can separate us from his love for us.

Jesus also speaks about abiding in prayer, in fellowship with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I think that's one of the key indicators of whether we're living a life of abiding in Christ and depending on God is our practice of prayer.

Do we feel our need to pray just as much as you get up in the morning and you feel hungry and thirsty and you know that to have strength and energy for the day, you need to drink water and eat food.

[11 : 53] In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray for our daily provision. Give us this day our daily bread, for our daily pardon, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us and for our daily protection.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Now, some days, we might not feel our need for prayer. You know, some days, you might not feel your need for food.

You know, if you're sick or if you're very depressed or if you're taking certain medications, they will make you not feel hungry. hungry. And yet, if you don't, if you don't, if you wait until you feel hungry to eat, and particularly if you're sick, it won't help you get better.

Sometimes you need to discipline yourself to eat on a regular basis and eat healthy foods that will nourish your body even when you don't feel like it. And sometimes, we need to discipline ourselves to pray in dependence upon God even when we feel like we don't really need to.

Even when we don't really feel inclined to because we need to realize our feelings are not, in this case, a good indicator of reality. Just like when you're sick and you don't feel hungry, you have to override that and do what you know is right in order for your long-term health.

[13 : 16] So Jesus reminds us of our dependence on Him. That's the first thing. You know, sometimes God reminds us of our dependence through being in situations like the disciples when they were fishing all night and worked hard and no result.

And sometimes, we're working as hard as we can or maybe you're looking for a job and every day you're going out and applying to five or six places and pounding the pavement and handing in your resume over and over and over again and you're doing all that you can do and you're still waiting and you realize this isn't totally in your control.

Right? But, and sometimes Jesus reminds us of our dependence in those ways but Jesus also wants us to be, to remember that we're dependent on Him even when everything's going well and when we're tempted to think that we're self-sufficient and self-made.

So Jesus reminds us of our dependence. that's the first thing. And He calls us to abide in Him. So second, second lesson that Jesus gives us, He calls us to invest for Him.

When they got out on the land they saw fish and bread prepared by Jesus. Jesus took the fish and bread and gave it to them.

[14 : 42] Now once again Jesus was reminding them of an event that happened in the past. from the middle of Jesus' ministry when Jesus had taken fish and bread and given it to the crowds of people to feed 5,000 men plus women and children.

Jesus, it's one of most, one of Jesus' most significant miracles. It's the only one recorded in all four Gospels. It's in John chapter 6 if you want to turn back there for a moment.

Now what was Jesus trying to remind His disciples of by sort of replaying this event in their mind? Well on the one hand it was a display of His abundant provision.

Right? All these fish. Right? Just as He had multiplied five loaves and two fish to give it to all the people. But it's not just about that.

It's also about Jesus' insistence that His disciples be involved in the process. In John chapter 6 verse 5 it says that seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him Jesus said to Philip where are we to buy bread for all these people to eat?

[15 : 54] And verse 6 said He said this to test Him for Jesus already had in mind what He was going to do. You see, if Jesus was the Lord is the Lord of creation if He was able to multiply five loaves and two fish to feed crowds of people thousands of people He didn't really need those five loaves and two fish in the first place.

He could have just created them out of nothing like He did in the first place. But no, He wanted His disciples to be invested and involved alongside Him in His ministry in His work.

And so He took a young boy's lunch that was willingly offered and He took that and multiplied it to feed the people.

And in John chapter 21 Jesus followed the same pattern. Jesus was already cooking fish and bread on the charcoal fire and then verse 10 He says bring some of the fish that you have just caught.

Bring me what you have. Jesus includes and multiplies the fruits of our labors in His work.

[17 : 11] So let me ask you this question. Can you remember a time when Jesus called you like He called the disciples to invest sacrificially and to give Him what you have to serve others and then He multiplied that for the good of other people and the glory of His name?

So a couple examples maybe maybe you are a Bible study leader or maybe you teach a Sunday school class and you faithfully prepare your lessons late at night because that's the only free time you have.

You work during the day you take care of your family in the evening. The only time you have is late at night but you faithfully prepare these lessons for the benefit of the kids in your class or the people in your group and somebody comes to you and says you know the questions you asked or the insights you gave they've really started to change the way I think about everything and they've shown me who God is and they've opened up the Bible to me and I say thank you.

or maybe maybe you heard that somebody in the church was sick or you or had a friend who was going through a really rough time and so you baked a bunch of cookies and took them over to their room knocked on their dorm room door or on the door of their house and he just said I just wanted to bring these to you.

Maybe you hung out with them and talked with them for a little while. Or maybe you took a hard step of gently confronting a brother or sister in Christ who was straying away from the way of Jesus and you confronted them and you said brother, sister this isn't right I'm concerned about you and you did that prayerfully and gently and humbly but clearly and they listened to you and they stopped doing whatever they were doing and they changed their ways and they came back to a closer relationship with Jesus.

[19 : 31] Now I know it doesn't always work that way when you extend yourself on behalf of someone else for Jesus' sake. most of the time most of the time was that Lord Lord of someone to and you can So that's it?

Violin bump.

Let's get started.
so Thank you.
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