

John on Jesus - Built for Others

September 8, 2013

Good morning Faith Church. Welcome to the last message in the Gospel of John. It took us 43 messages to finish the book. I am sad we are finished. This Gospel taught us so much about Christ. Next Sunday, Pastor Leland preaches. After that, we begin a new series called “FINGERPRINT --- What makes Faith Church unique?” It is a seven-week series. Each week is dedicated to fleshing out one of our core values.

This morning, we are in John 21. Take out your Bibles and find the chapter. If you are using the pew Bible, it is page 907. I encourage you to take out your outline and jot down some notes. Our Life Groups are sermon-based so taking notes is very helpful for your Life Group discussions. If you are new and not in a Life Group, I encourage you to join one. Now is a great time to find one that fits your schedule as many are just starting this fall.

Last week, when we finished chapter 20, it sounded like the book finished. I expected to read the words, “the end” when we finished the chapter.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:30–31 (ESV)

Since everything finished in chapter 20, why did John write chapter 21? Let’s think about this. John said everything in chapters 1 to 20 was written so you would believe that Jesus is the Christ. By believing, you would have life in his name. If we believe Jesus is the Son of God and he died in our places for our sins, we have life through him. This is not just eternal life that when we die we

go to be with Christ in heaven. This life begins now. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and remakes us. He breaks the power of sin. For the first time we have the power to say “No” to sin. The Holy Spirit gives us new affections. Rather than sin being the great delight of our hearts, enjoying Christ becomes our new delight. Sin is still attractive but Jesus is more attractive. Do we still sin? Of course we do, but we are changing and we don’t sin like we used to.

Today, as we put our fingers in chapter 21, we discover that after we believe, there is work to do. Among Christians, there is this false understanding that having faith in Jesus is the finish line. Once you cross it, you are done.

Belief in Christ needs to move from our head to our hands. Following Christ is not just about growing in understanding but is flushed out in practical everyday living. This is where we find ourselves when we begin chapter 21.

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), Nathanael 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. 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. 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. John 21:1–14 (ESV)

On the evening of resurrection Sunday, and a week later with Thomas present, Jesus appeared to the disciples transporting himself like he was on Star Trek into locked rooms. After those appearances, the disciples moved 80 miles north from Jerusalem to the Sea of Tiberius, which is just another name for the Sea of Galilee. This is where Jesus called them to be disciples and the story began more than two years before. Why did they go there? This is an interesting piece of trivia. They went there because Jesus told them to. Look what Jesus said to Mary after he rose from the dead.

Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” Matthew 28:10 (ESV)

The disciples were hanging out in Galilee killing time drinking lattes. Peter just couldn't sit still, partially because he was a guy and partially because he had too much caffeine in his system. The smell of the lake, the lapping of the water on the shore and the familiarity of his old career lured him back to fishing. A number of the other disciples also had fishing backgrounds so everybody banded together and headed out to sea to fish. They fished by night. This sounds strange. We fish in the daytime. Why did they fish at night? Night fishing was the way fishing was done in the ancient world. The only way you could sell fresh fish in the market that morning was if you caught them overnight. Keeping fish from one day to the next in a world without refrigeration did not work. To keep your fish fresh, you caught them at night and sold them first thing in the morning.

Unfortunately, our professional fishermen seem to have lost their touch. They fished all night and caught absolutely nothing. Why was this? Obviously

they were not using Pure Fishing products. Actually, there is a biblical reason they caught nothing. Jesus told the fish to stay out of the net. You think I am joking. I am serious. Jesus is the one who tells the fish when to bite. We know Jesus is God. He is large and in charge of everything. In Matthew 17:27, when it came time for Jesus to pay his taxes, how did he do it? He told Peter to go to the sea, throw in a line and Jesus would command a specific fish to bite a specific line. When Peter opened that fish's mouth, he found a coin worth four drachmas that he could use to pay Jesus' taxes as well as Peter's. Jesus was very much in charge of what and when the fish are biting. Jesus told all of the fish to stay out of the net. He did it for a reason.

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore and called out to the disciples, asking if they had any fish. The ESV says he called them, "children." That is a literal translation but it doesn't convey the sense of the original language. You could translate it as "guys" or "dudes." "Dudes, you catch any fish?" In what is a display of complete fishing humility, they admitted they had nothing. It took a lot of humility for a professional fishermen to admit they were skunked. Jesus told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. When they did, the net was full, just bursting with fish.

It was still dark. The sun was just beginning to rise. Perhaps there was fog on the water. Up to this moment, nobody knew it was Jesus on the shore. Then, in a flash of insight, John figured out it was Jesus. How did he know this? It is called *deja-vu*.

Luke 5 tells us about what happened when Jesus first called his disciples more than two years before this.

And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “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, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.
Luke 5:4–6 (ESV)

You can picture John connecting the dots and realizing Jesus was pulling the old fish miracle. The miracle that started the whole adventure more than two years before happened again. When Peter heard John, he connected the dots too. He threw on his clothes and jumped in the water to swim for shore. This sounds strange to me. Why would you throw your clothes on to swim for shore? I took lifesaving as a kid at the YMCA. They taught me to swim with my clothes off. Why did Peter get dressed before he took his swim? If you read the Greek it says Peter was stripped for work — in the Greek, the word for stripped means he was literally naked. I don’t know if fishing in the buff was trendy at the time. Maybe Peter just worked up a sweat from hauling in nets. I don’t know. I do know that at the very most, Peter had on nothing more than his underwear. With the sun coming up and having Jesus, who is God in the flesh, calling for you on shore, Peter figured modesty would be important. This is why he dressed before jumping in the water.

When Peter and the disciples got to land, there was a charcoal fire. Jesus was cooking breakfast. I love this. Jesus was very practical. He knew they were exhausted. They were up all night working. They needed to eat. Jesus cooked

up fish sandwiches for everyone. Incidentally, Jesus was not vegan, even in his resurrected state.

This reminds me of hunting camp except Jesus did the cooking. He even asked the disciples to bring some of the fish they caught to cook on the fire. I assume this means God approves of everyone having a second plate.

There is a little humor here. Jesus told the disciples to grab some of the fish. Peter, who loved Jesus so deeply, jumped into action and brought the net ashore with 153 fish. I think this tells us a little about Peter. Last week, we saw Peter and John running for the empty tomb. John got tired of waiting for Peter because he was slow so he ran ahead and arrived at the empty tomb first. Here we see why Peter was slow. John was the skinny track star. Peter was a power lifter. He single-handedly pulled ashore a net with 153 large fish. Can you picture Peter's physique? The guy must have looked he came from the front line of the Iowa State football team.

Jesus loves deja-vu moments. He used that with the amazing catch of fish. He also played deja-vu with the charcoal fire. Does anybody know the only other time in this Gospel it talks about a charcoal fire? It was the night Peter betrayed Jesus. The super-huge power lifter, who could pose for Muscle magazine, denied even knowing Jesus when a girl in junior high asked him if he was a disciple. It all happened around a charcoal fire. Then Peter was around a charcoal fire again, except Jesus was risen from the dead and cooking him a fish sandwich. Can you sense the tension of the moment? The charcoal fire had Peter, and all of the other disciples, wondering how Jesus and Peter would settle

the score after Peter denied Jesus three times. What did Jesus say to Peter?

Let's find out.

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." 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." John 21:15–19 (ESV)

Breakfast was over. Everyone was using their napkins. Jesus broke the ice asking Peter three times if he loved him. I think the first time Jesus asked Peter about his love it was especially insightful because there was a little phrase on the end of it, "more than." "Peter, do you love me *more than* the other disciples?" In John 13:36-38, right before Jesus' Upper Room discourse and right after Jesus announced that someone would betray him, Peter bragged up his love and commitment in front of the group saying, "I am ready to die for you, Jesus." Translated, it meant, "I love you more than the others." Subsequently, Peter showed himself a coward and denied even knowing Jesus three times before morning. Jesus said to him, "Peter, do you really love me more than the other disciples?" Peter responded by saying, "Lord, you know I love you." He left off the tagline of, "more than" the others. Three times Jesus asked him if he loved him and three times Peter told Jesus that he did. Just as Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus asked him if he loved him three times.

There are a couple observations we need to make. First, this was a painful rebuke for Peter. If I ask my kids the same thing three times in a row, it is a way of saying I don't believe their answer. Jesus asking Peter three times in a row in front of the other disciples was a form of public rebuke. It was good for Peter to publicly admit his love was not as strong as he claimed.

At the same time, this was also public restoration. Each time Jesus talked with Peter about his failures, he didn't end it by kicking him in the mouth but by restoring him to serve others. I love this about Jesus. He is so patient.

On a side note, those of you who spent time around the church and heard this passage taught on years ago will probably remember preachers making a big deal on the different words used for love in this passage. Twice Jesus used the Greek word *agape*, which is one-way love of choice. Three times Peter responded using the Greek word *phileo* means brotherly love or family love. Preachers in a previous era made a big deal of this. Scholars who study the Gospel of John have noted that John often uses these two Greek words for love interchangeably. While the difference between these Greek words for love is important, in this passage, that difference is probably not as important as scholars in a previous era once thought.

What is the point of these verses? I think the point that we need to take away from these verses is right on the surface. It is not hidden in some obscure Greek words. "Peter, if you love me, here is what I want you do to. Show it by feeding my sheep. Tend my flock. Peter, if you love me, show your love by

pastoring/shepherding my people.” We show our love for Jesus by loving and serving Jesus’ people.

Peter, teach my people the Scriptures. Encourage them. Counsel them. Care for them. Feed them. Jesus was simply saying to Peter, and to us, “If you love me, show it by doing spiritual good for others, especially others in the church.”

This where we stumble. We get our theology right. We get our sins forgiven. We read the Bible. We pray. We get our lives neat and in order. The problem is, that is not how we love Jesus. If we love Jesus, we show it by shepherding his people.

At Faith Church, this is why we focus on serving others before serving ourselves. I will teach on the importance of serving in our new series. Serving ourselves comes quite naturally. Serving others is something we need to be challenged toward. Some of us are amazing servants in the church. Others of us love the sidelines. We love to stay disconnected because people are messy and time-consuming. Pastoring people is also the way we love God.

As your pastor, I challenge you to get involved serving others either formally around the church or informally outside of the church. Get involved being a mentor in a Faith U class. We are short on helpers. Help with AWANA or youth group. Lead a Life Group. We show our love for God by loving and pastoring people.

Let’s make this really easy for those of you who are young in your faith or for whatever reason have a hard time connecting into formal church ministries

outside of Sunday morning. How do you love other Christians and do them spiritual good? Use Jesus' strategy. Cook others breakfast. Find somebody who needs a little spiritual encouragement and take them out for breakfast. Read a little Bible together and pray for them. That is all it takes.

“If you love me, you will not be a narcissistic navel gazer that can only think about yourself and your failures but you will care for others like a shepherd cares for his sheep.”

Next, Jesus told Peter how his life would end up. Peter told Jesus he would be willing to die for him; Jesus told him that he would get that chance. When he was old, his hands would be stretched out and he would go where he did not want to go. “Your hands will be stretched out” is an ancient cliché for crucifixion. History tells us that is exactly what happened to Peter. Under the Roman emperor Nero, Peter was crucified. He didn't feel worthy to be crucified in the same position as Christ. He requested to be crucified upside down.

Now we have a little humor.

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?” 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!” 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. John 21:20–25 (ESV)

At this point, it appears Peter and Jesus were walking along the beach. Peter turned around and saw the apostle John walking behind them. This was

the apostle Jesus loved. This was the mystery unnamed apostle throughout the Gospel. Peter said, "This is great. You give me my life plan of serving your people and even telling me I will bring glory to your name by dying on a cross, just like you did. What about John? He seems to always get off easy. He always appears to be the favored child. If I crucified, does he at least get tortured on the rack or something painful? This isn't fair."

I love the way Jesus answered him. "Stop worrying about everybody else and my plan for their lives. Just focus on my plan for your life. Follow me with the plan I have for you." Too often, we get caught in the comparison trap, just like Peter. Why can't I be successful and have my own television show like "Duck Dynasty"? I made duck calls in my barn for years and I never became rich and famous.

Jesus tells us to stop it. "Don't get caught in the comparison trap. Just follow me. My plan for your life may involve more comfort than others or it may involve more suffering than others. Stop worrying about others and their life. You just worry about following me in your life and bringing glory to me in the life circumstances I choose to send your way."

I know a number of you are angry at God because your life is harder than others' lives. You get stuck there and you are angry at God. That is the comparison trap. Just honor God where he has you right now. God's plan for Peter was that he would die a martyr's death. What was God's plan for the apostle John?

History tells us John was the one disciple that was not martyred for Christ. His life was definitely not pain free. They tried to kill him by dropping him in a pot of boiling oil, a huge Fry Daddy. Amazingly, he survived. I am sure it ruined his complexion. Since they couldn't kill him, he was exiled to the rock island of Patmos where he lived on a barren rock in isolation and agony. While there, he received the book of Revelation from Jesus. Eventually he returned to civilization as an old man and lived in Ephesus where he helped pastor the church until he died at a ripe old age.

Lessons from John 21

1. **Our love for Christ is shown by our love for his people.** It is so easy to become a narcissistic navel gazing Christian that focuses just on your Bible study, prayer time and personal life with God. That isn't God's will for us. We show our love for him by shepherding others in the church and doing them spiritual good.

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." John 21:16 (ESV)

This week, get involved in somebody's life. If you can't do anything else, just take somebody to breakfast, listen to them, read a little Bible and pray with them.

2. **Worldly remorse leads to death. Godly grief leads to restoration.** Both Peter and Judas failed Jesus. Judas let his grief lead to remorse which led to shame, which led to death. Just like Ariel Castro, Judas hung himself. Peter messed up, but instead of running from Jesus in shame, he ran to Jesus in

repentance and humility. He no longer claimed to love Jesus more than anyone else. He just loved Jesus. He messed up and was sorry about it. As a result, Jesus was so amazing. He cooked him breakfast. Jesus restored and used him as the leader of the early church.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)

- 3. Don't get caught in the comparison trap.** This was one of Peter's vices. He found his identity in comparing himself to others. Many of the competitive guys in the room have the same problem. Our identity is in what we achieve that distinguishes us from others. That was Peter. He claimed to love Jesus more than the other disciples. Jesus let him fail, which cut him down to size and brought him much needed humility. When we spend our time comparing ourselves to others, we are following others. Jesus says, "Don't worry about following others, just follow me. I am the only one you need to please." Peter and John were good friends but God had different plans for their lives in how they would glorify him. For Peter, it involved martyrdom. For John, it involved horrific torture but it also involved living to a ripe old age. That is OK. That was the way God planned for each of them to glorify him. God was just as much in control of every moment of their lives and their deaths as he was in control of the fish.

Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" John 21:22 (ESV)



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