



EST FONDS VITAE

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SERIES

John: That You May Believe

TITLE & PASSAGE

Grace to Follow the Sovereign Savior

John 21:1-25

OCCASION

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter on the Lord's Day to the congregation of First Baptist Church of Diana, TX.

INTRODUCTION

John's Gospel ends with a return to the gritty reality of discipleship in a fallen world. Chapter 20 closes on a high note recording a true confession of Christ's person and work and pronouncing the benefits that come from such blessed belief. In chapter 21, John returns his reader to an earthy perspective with gracious promises and demands. In this message, we shall consider the importance of Jesus' reaffirmation and recommissioning of Peter and the personal call Christ makes to all His disciples. May God help us to lovingly follow the sovereign Savior, and may God nourish us by His word and keep us by His power.

MAIN POINT

God graciously calls disciples to lovingly follow the sovereign Savior, nourishing them by His word and keeping them by His power.

EMAIL QUESTIONS TO PASTOR@FBCDIANA.ORG

SCRIPTURE READING

John 21:1–25 (ESV)

1 After this **Jesus revealed himself** again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. 3 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.

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” 6 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.

7 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. 8 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.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” 11 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.

12 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.** 13 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. 14 This was now the third time that **Jesus was revealed to the disciples** after he was raised from the dead.

15 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.**”

16 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.**”

17 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.**”

18 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.” 19 (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.**”

20 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?” 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” 22 Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? **You follow me!**”

23 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?”

24 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.

25 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.

MAIN POINT

God graciously calls disciples to lovingly follow the sovereign Savior, nourishing them by His word and keeping them by His power.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

(1) THE LORD REVEALED (1-14)

(2) GRACE TO LOVE & FOLLOW (15-19)

(3) STILL AN IMPETUOUS DISCIPLE (20-25)

(4) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

MESSAGE

(1) THE LORD REVEALED (1-14)

- In our passage, we are told about a “**third time**” (v14) when Jesus showed or “**revealed himself**” (v1) to His disciples after His resurrection.
 - There must have been some remaining mystery to Jesus’ resurrection, for the disciples wanted to ask Him, “**Who are you?**” (v12), though none of them did.
 - But the resurrected Jesus was not so different from the Jesus the disciples had known before, and their belief in the divine person of Christ was growing, since “**they knew it was the Lord**” (v12).
- **Jesus revealed Himself as “Lord”** (v7, 12, 15, 16, 17, 21)
 - The declaration of Jesus as “**Lord**” is the turning point in this narrative.
 - Peter and John and at least 5 other disciples had gone fishing (v3).
 - Commentators disagree about what to think of this fishing trip.
 - Some say that it was Peter and the other disciples’ return to their old way of life, basically “**packing up and going home**” instead of being Jesus’ initial Spirit-empowered witnesses to the world (Jn. 20:21-23). These commentators see a kind of reluctance to believe and follow on the part of the disciples here... even after they had seen the resurrected Christ.
 - Some say that this is merely an account of fisherman going to find food and finances in the way they knew how to do it. These commentators see no wavering of faith in Peter or the other disciples here... just a practical effort to be responsible working men.
 - Either way, Jesus meets His disciples where they are and calls out to them.
 - He speaks as a wise man (possibly perceived as a heckler) from the shore.
 - Jesus yells out, “**Children, do you have any fish?**” (v5)
 - Because of the situation, this question and the answer likely stings the disciples a bit.

- Then Jesus tells them to “Cast the net on the right side of the boat” (v6).
 - No fisherman likes words like these... “Why don’t you try over there?” But they do as the advisor from the shore told them.
 - At this moment Jesus is revealed as Lord.
 - Jesus shows Himself Lord over all, even the fish in the sea (v6).
 - And John, “that disciples whom Jesus loved,” shouted, “It is the Lord!” (v7).
- Jesus shows His lordship in at least 3 ways here.

1) He is sovereign over creation

- Jesus said, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some” (v6).
 - They will find some what? **Some fish!**
 - And did they find any? **Yes!** So many that “they were not able to haul it in [i.e. into the boat]” (v6).
 - Jesus is sovereign over all creation while His disciples were catching nothing and when their catch was too large to handle.
 - There is much to ponder here.

2) He knows where His people are

- Jesus “stood on the shore” right where He knew His disciples would be “as day was breaking” (v4).
 - How did Jesus know they would be there?
 - Was it dumb luck?
 - Did Jesus walk along the shore all night, and only just stumble upon the disciples when it became light?
 - No! Of course not! Jesus came right to them, knowing exactly where His people are.

3) *He provides for His people*

- Not only did Jesus provide for His disciples by giving them a great harvest of fish from a single net...
- Jesus also provided for their simpler needs.
 - “When they [the disciples] got out on land, they saw a charcoal **fire in place**, with **fish** laid out on it, and **bread**” (v9).
 - When did the fish get to the land? When the disciples did.
 - So, what fish were on the fire? Those fish Jesus provided for them before they got to land.
 - Jesus met their simple need for breakfast

Jesus is revealed as Lord!

- Friends, do you know that Jesus is Lord today?
 - **Do you know that Jesus is sovereign over all creation?**
 - How has your return on investment been recently?
 - Is your boat full or empty?
 - Do you know that Jesus is sovereign over both full and empty boats?
 - **Friends, do you know that Jesus knows where His people are?**
 - Now, of course, Jesus knows where everyone is at every second.... But I’m asking you if you remember that Jesus knows where His people are.
 - Can darkness, or storms, or obstacles, or geographical location block the gaze of the Lord?
 - Oh, no, these cannot! Let us say with the Psalmist, “O LORD, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is

high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there! ***If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.*** If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to You; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with You" (Psalm 139:1–12)

- **And, do you know that Jesus provides for His people?**
 - Now this does not mean that Christians always have healthy, wealthy, and prosperous lives in this world...
 - In fact, as we shall see, Jesus promised that Peter's death would be brutal and painful precisely because Peter would live his life in service to Christ.
 - But I am asking if you know that Jesus provides for His people as He sees fit.
 - Do you know that everything you have is a gift from Christ?
 - When you have too little, do you worry about how you will be able to create a miracle?
 - When you have more than enough, do you foolishly imagine that it is your wealth to spend as you please?

But what is the chief focus of Jesus' lordship in this passage/story?

Isn't it Peter's grace-filled return to Christ and the reiteration of Christ's commission especially to him?!

(2) GRACE TO LOVE & FOLLOW (15-19)

- **Peter failed in the face of great promises**

- Just before Jesus died, He said much to His disciples
 - Jesus had promised His disciples a “**Helper**,” no less than God’s own Spirit, who would empower them to “**bear witness**” about Christ in the world (Jn. 15:26-27).
 - Jesus spoke of trials to come and promised His disciples many blessings in order to “**keep them from falling away**” when times get hard (Jn. 16:1).
- Peter declared his determination
 - When Jesus said He was about to leave His disciples, Peter brashly said that there was nowhere Jesus could go that Peter would not follow... Peter even said, “**I will lay down my life for you!**” (Jn. 13:37)
- But Peter in fact did not last the night...
 - Peter denied even knowing Jesus three times, as he was warming himself beside a “**charcoal fire**” (Jn. 18:18).

- **Peter questioned again, but this time by the gracious Lord**

- In our passage, we see another gathering around a “**charcoal fire**” (v9) and another set of three questions aimed at Peter’s heart (v15-17).
 - Just several days before, a servant girl had asked Peter if he was one of Jesus’ disciples; now Jesus Himself was asking Peter the more important and probing question: “**Do you love me?**”
 - Jesus does not want to know if Peter will make a public profession of faith/discipleship... Jesus wants to know if Peter has genuine love for the Savior!
 - There is much here, but we must ask ourselves how we might answer such a question.
 - **What would you say** to Jesus if He asked you right now, “**Do you love me?**”
 - Don’t you know that this is exactly the question for us all to answer today? Tomorrow? Every second of our lives?
 - **Am I** living a life that reflects love for Christ?

- There are 3 things that I'd like to emphasize about this exchange (v15-19)

1) *This line of questioning is for Peter's good*

- Peter needed to be reaffirmed by Jesus after his betrayal.
 - One can only imagine what Peter must have felt upon Jesus' resurrection, but it is plausible that he would have assumed that his own place among Jesus' blessed disciples had been forfeited by his foolish and cowardly actions.

2) *These questions are humbling*

- Note the repetition
 - "Simon, son of John, do you love me..." times 3 (v15, 16, 17).
- Note Peter's final reply
 - "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you" times 2 (v15, 16).
 - "Lord, **you know everything**; you know that I love you" (v17).

3) *Love is not a feeling here; it is an active responsibility*

- Peter's love is to be expressed by:
 - A. "feeding" (*boske*) and "tending" (*poimaine*) Christ's "sheep"
 - B. "following me [Christ]" despite the certainty of persecution and violent death.
- A. Peter's love for Christ is to be expressed by him "feeding (*boske* – feed, tend) [Christ's] lambs" (v15, 17) and "tending (*poimaine* – shepherd) [Christ's] sheep" (v16)
 - Jesus charged Peter 3 times with the same basic command: "Feed/Tend/Shepherd my sheep"
 - 3 Questions
 1. Who are Christ's sheep?
 2. What does Christ mean by feed/tend/shepherd?
 3. Is this charge for Peter alone? If not, then who else?

1. Who are Christ's sheep?

- Jesus used the language of sheep before in John 10. Jesus called Himself the “**Good Shepherd**” who “**lays down his life for the sheep**” (Jn. 10:11). These sheep are:
 - Those for whom Christ died (v11)
 - Those who enter the sheepfold through Christ, and no other way (v9)
 - Those who know Christ and are known by Christ (v14)
 - Those who listen to the voice or words of Christ (v16)
 - Those who are united with other sheep under the one Shepherd – Christ (v16)
 - So, Christ's sheep are His people, His disciples, Christians, Christ-followers.

2. What does Christ mean by feed/tend/shepherd?

- We can know what Peter understood this to mean by looking at how he urged other people to feed/tend/shepherd Christ's sheep.
 - In 1 Peter 5, Peter charges “**elders**” (v1) as those responsible for feeding/tending/shepherding Christ's sheep.
 - Peter charges them to “**shepherd the flock of God that is among you [them]**” (v2).
 - This task of “**shepherding**” includes “**oversight**” (v2), living as “**examples to the flock**” (v3), and doing these things “**willingly**” and “**eagerly**” (v2).
- Elsewhere in Scripture, we learn that elders “**attend the flock**” (Acts 20:28), “**pray, intercede, and give thanks**” (1 Tim. 2:1), “**train themselves for godliness**” (1 Tim. 4:7), “**command and teach**” (1 Tim. 4:11), “**devote themselves to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation [and] teaching**” (1 Tim. 4:13), and they “**entrust what they have heard [or learned] to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also**” (2 Tim. 2:2).

- So, feeding/tending/shepherding is the task of pastoring...
 - And what are elders/pastors to feed Christ's sheep?
 - The word of Christ / God!

3. Is this charge for Peter alone? If not, then who else?

- Already, I have demonstrated that “elders” all share the same responsibility or charge that Christ gave Peter here (1 Peter 5:1-5).
 - So, no, Peter does not bear the charge alone.
- But, may we conclude that only “elders” or “pastors” or some special class of Christian bear any responsibility to “feed” other Christians or “tend” to fellow believers?
 - **NO!** To regular, everyday Christians, the Scripture commands:
 - Colossians 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another...”
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – “encourage one another and build one another up”
 - Galatians 6:2 – “Bear one another's burdens...”
 - So, again I say, Peter does not bear this charge from Jesus alone.
 - Local church elders/pastors bear a special weight of this charge, but church members are on the hook as well.

B. Peter's love for Christ is to be expressed by him “following [Christ]” despite the promise of an excruciating death (v19).

- Peter was promised a martyrdom by way of crucifixion.
 - The legend of Peter hanging upside-down at his request is insufficiently substantiated, but Peter's

fidelity to Christ – even unto death – is not at all in question.

- In the face of this promise, Jesus called Peter to “follow me!”
 - This is a familiar calling from Jesus, and He regularly invited people by the use of this phrase (Mk. 2:14, 10:21; Jn. 8:12)
- We can know something of the meaning of “following Jesus” when we consider Jesus’ bitter pronouncement, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23).
 - Jesus’ use of this language must have been frequent, because Matthew records Jesus pressing the point further by saying, “whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10:38).

So, John takes great pains to tell us, the reader, that Peter is graciously restored here...

But what is the takeaway for us?

- Friends, Peter was graciously restored!
 - Why do we speak of “Judas the betrayer” and “doubting Thomas,” but not of “cowardly Peter” or “denying Peter” or “foolish Peter?”
 - The reason we don’t define Peter by his worst moments is because he was also a resolute Christ-follower and leader of other Christ-followers.
 - Have you ever felt as though your life and actions, your thoughts and words must force Christ to abandon you?
 - Let Peter’s restoration be a comfort to you!
 - Christ graciously restores broken, guilty, and shameful sinners!
- But, let’s not forget that Peter’s gracious restoration was also *into* something... It was *for* something!
 - What was Peter graciously called to do?
 - Wasn’t he called to love the Savior?
 - And, how would he love the Savior?
 - By feeding/tending/shepherding and by following!
 - Do you think of love this way?

God graciously calls disciples to lovingly follow the sovereign Savior, **sustaining them by His word** and keeping them by His power.

So, we see Peter restored, graciously called by God to lovingly follow Christ...

And we see that Christ recommissioned Peter (as He commissions all elders/pastors) to feed/tend/shepherd Christ's sheep...

And we understand that Christ is the Lord who has done and continues to do all this...

But, what about this last scene with Peter?

(3) STILL AN IMPETUOUS DISCIPLE (20-25)

- The restored and recommissioned Peter is still impetuous
 - Peter saw John (the Gospel-writer) following behind him and Jesus as they walked along, and Peter, hearing that he would face a martyr's death, asked about John.
 - "Lord, what about this man?" (v21)
 - Jesus' reply is how we know that Peter's question was foolish.
 - "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? **You follow me!**" (v22)
 - In the Greek, there is much emphasis on the "You."
 - In other words, "Don't you worry about him... You worry about yourself and follow me!"
 - This narrative about Jesus' restoration and recommission of Peter is an encouragement to any imperfect and sometimes foolish disciples.
 - God graciously calls disciples to lovingly follow the sovereign Savior, sustaining them by His word and **keeping them by His power.**

(4) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you know Jesus as Lord?

- a. Do you know Him as Lord over creation?
- b. Do you know Him as the all-knowing God, aware of you this very instant?
- c. Do you know Him as sovereign provider, owner and giver of everything you have?
- d. Whether you are a Christian or a non-Christian, do you realize that the Jesus I am talking about today is Lord over every aspect of your life?

2. Do you love Jesus?

- a. If you are a non-Christian, then your answer is definitely “no.”
 - i. This is not to say that you must feel some sense of animosity towards Jesus at this moment...
 - ii. But it is to say that the defining mark of a Christian is genuine love for Jesus.
- b. If you think you are a Christian, then consider, do you truly love Him?
 - i. Think for a moment... don't just assume you know the answer.
 1. How is your love for Christ demonstrated in your thoughts, words, and deeds?
 2. Do you love to hear and know the word of Christ – the Scriptures?
 3. Do you share in the joy of others knowing and loving Jesus?
 4. If you are a church member, how are you showing your love for Christ by loving fellow church members?

3. Are you following Jesus?

- a. This is not separate from loving Jesus... if you're not following Him then you are not loving Him.
- b. But this is not about perfect morality or obedience at every turn.
- c. Are you following Jesus like Peter?
 - i. Are you striving to follow Christ well, and sometimes really botching everything?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR THIS PASSAGE/TOPIC

Whom do You Love? by Matt Slick

<https://carm.org/sermon-john-2115-17-who-do-you-love>

The Transforming Effect of Loving Christ by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/SC17-2>

Simon Peter, Do You Love Me? by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/bibleqnas-library/QA0304/simon-peter-do-you-love-me>