

A Restored Disciple

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Date: 16 August 2020

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[0 : 00] Good morning, my name is Becky and today Struan and I will be reading from John 21 verses 1 to 19. Afterwards, Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee.

It happened this way. Simon Peter, Thomas, also known as Dimaeus, Nathaniel from Canaan in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and the two other disciples were together.

I'm going out to fish, Simon Peter told them, and they said, we'll go with you. So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. He called out to them, friends, haven't you any fish?

No, they answered. He said, throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.

When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

[1 : 05] Then the disciples, whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, it is the Lord. As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, it is the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him, for he had taken it off and jumped into the water.

The other disciples followed. They were not far from shore, about a hundred metres. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals. There were fish on it and some bread.

Jesus said to them, bring some of the fish you have just caught. So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three, but even with so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them, come and have breakfast. None of the disciples dared ask him, who are you? They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish.

This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples, after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

[2 : 25] Yes, Lord, he said. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs. Again, Jesus said, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep.

Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

Jesus said, this is to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, follow me. We're just going to pray now for Graham.

[3 : 31] Dear Lord, thank you that we can meet virtually to come together as your church this morning, Lord. I just pray that you would be with Graham as he speaks to us to speak through the gospel of John.

I pray that we can open up our ears, our hearts and our minds to your gospel, your word, your life-giving word to us this morning.

Again, be with Graham, encourage him, your spirit be upon him as he speaks in your name. Amen. Well, good morning, everyone. It's great to have you with us.

We are finishing our little series that we've been in over the summer months where we've been looking at the encounters that Jesus had with people as we meet him in John's gospel.

So we're going to finish this morning. Let me invite you to come to John chapter 21. This is where we're going to be in these wonderful verses. You see, when I was at school, one of the biggest names in showbiz and in the music industry was Robbie Williams.

[4 : 35] Right? Robbie had just left. Take that to a lot of tears and he was determined to go as a solo artist. And fair play to the guy. I mean, over a number of years he recorded, and I wrote this down, 14 official number ones.

And actually he had more chart-topping albums in the UK than Elvis Presley. I'll just give you a taste of how influential he was at school. How popular he was.

I remember turning over an exam paper once. Right? Controversial week to talk about exam papers. So this is what I did. Turned over an exam paper to see his lyrics. And it simply said, discuss. I remember being at school when Robbie Williams released a song and it was called No Regrets.

Right? No Regrets. No one of this. No regrets. They don't work. No regrets. They only hurt. And so this song comes out and all of a sudden it becomes the done thing.

The fashionable thing. To look back on your life and talk about it like you wouldn't change a single thing about it. Right? So to admit a mistake or to show a bit of weakness was a telltale sign that you needed to develop a more positive way of thinking.

[5 : 46] A more positive mental attitude. So you would go into town on the train and in every shop you would see these t-shirts. And I went on Amazon and they're still selling them today. They just simply said, no regrets.

But here's the thing you come to see, I guess, as you get older. And as you learn a few lessons in the school of life. Right? Regrets. Man, I've got thousands of them.

I've got wee ones. And I've got big ones. Right? I've got actions I look back on I can't undo. I've got words that I look back on I can't take back.

I look at opportunities that I missed. And the thing is, isn't it, with our regrets, they can sit on us, they can weigh on us, and they can lead to a sense of shame and guilt and fear.

And how often do our regrets leave a lasting scar on our life, sometimes that we bear for the rest of our days? Many of you will know the pain of what it is to carry around something like that for years.

[6 : 52] And so here's the question that this passage would ask us, is where do you run with your regrets? Right? Where do you go? You see, central to our passage today is this man named Peter.

And I'm sure if you'd have asked him, in his life, what his biggest life regret is, he would have undoubtedly led you to the time when he denied Jesus three times.

And if you've got your Bibles there, here's the thing that you'll see. If you flick back a few pages to chapter 13 and verse 34. So Jesus is with his disciples and he's told them what's going to happen. He said that he's going to Jerusalem to lay down his life on the cross. And he said that where he is going, the disciples cannot come. And so Peter hears this and he's clearly taking his brave pills that morning.

He points to the other disciples and he says, see them, even if they fall away, even if they disown you, do you know what? I'm going to be right here, right next to you. We're going right there and I'm going to be your wingman.

[7 : 59] This is what he says. And just like Jesus knew, when that time came, three times Peter crumbled. Context of John 21, just before it, Jesus has died, Jesus has risen.

And as we saw last week, Jesus has appeared to his disciples. And this is where we tap into chapter 21. Now we're going to spend most of our time, if you've got the text there, in verses 15 to 19.

But I want us to see the encounter that Jesus has with his disciples in the first half of John 21.

Because they just paint for us a magnificent portrait of who Jesus is.

Right? You'll love this. Come with me. So the disciples have made their way, verse 1, you'll see to the Sea of Galilee. So this is the place where Jesus has told them to go. What are they doing?

They're out fishing.

Right? That's what they're used to do in a job. Here they go, they're out fishing. I know there's two things here about the disciples and about Jesus. Okay? Or there's three things, rather, actually.

[9 : 06] The disciples are helpless. Do you see that? They've been all night. Out all night, they've caught nothing. Jesus provides for them fish to eat and to catch.

The disciples are hungry. They've been out all night. They've caught nothing. Jesus provides breakfast for them. The disciples are weary. They've been out all night. They've caught nothing. And Jesus says, come and eat.

In fact, the language there, it's the invitation is more than just come and fill your stomachs. Right? It's Jesus is saying, come and spend time with me.

Let me refresh you with my presence. As you take in who I am and what's going on here. Do you see all the way through this little section, the initiative is all from Jesus.

He's going towards them. He's making the moves. He's providing all the things. Here's the point.

That before these men spend themselves in the service of Jesus, they must themselves be served by Jesus.

[10:13] You see, way before this Christian discipleship thing is about their commitment to him, it's first and foremost about his commitment to them.

And so he says, come and have breakfast. I mean, how wonderful a lesson that is for everyday disciples then, everyday disciples now. The importance of spending time resting in, walking with, knowing every day that Jesus who has loved us.

In fact, it was George Muller, the Christian evangelist who set up many orphanages down in Bristol. I remember he used to live there. He used to talk about this man.

And he used to say, with so many pressing things, pressing in on his to-do list, so many things going around in his head. Somebody once asked him, what is the most important thing that you start your day with? And he said that the great and primary business to which he ought to attend every day was to have his soul happy in the Lord.

Jesus says, come and have breakfast. In verse 15, the camera turns to focus in on this conversation between Peter and Jesus.

[11:28] And so with Peter's threefold denial of Jesus hanging here in the background, the Lamb of God, he goes straight for the elephant in the room.

So I want you to savour two wonderful things about Jesus as we see him here. Okay, as we see him interacting with Peter. Here's the first one.

And I want us to see and I want you to know how Jesus treats us when we fail him. Now let's pause here just for a minute. Okay, and here's what I was thinking this week.

What would I have done in this situation if I were Jesus? Right? Given everything that Peter's done in this point, how would I have approached this conversation around this charcoal fire having breakfast?

Here's what I would have been tempted to do. I would have been tempted to answer every question that somebody asked me with the words cock-a-doodle-doo. That's what I would have done, right? I would have scratched my ear with three fingers and I would have stared intently in Peter's direction.

[12:32] But that's not what Jesus does. Jesus has one simple question for Peter. Do you see it? Verse 15, he simply asks, do you love me?

Again, verse 16, do you love me? And finally, verse 17, he says, do you love me?

And I think what's going on here is Jesus is leading Peter back to that place of simple, childlike faith. I mean, that's all he's got, isn't it, Peter?

That's all he's got. He can't point back to his past performance and say, see. Do you see it? Do you see what I did for you? Do you see how I performed for you? Do you see how I stood? No, he can't say that.

He simply says, Lord, in my weakness and in my failing, you alone know my heart. And Jesus deals with Peter's three-time failure around a charcoal fire by bringing out from deep within him this three-fold confession of his simple love for him around another charcoal fire.

[13:42] On the beach. And just take a moment and take that in. Are you not so glad that Jesus is like this? That the posture that's most natural to him is not a finger whack, but rather it's wide open arms.

That he doesn't back off when his people fall and say, you need to get your act together before I come close. It's almost like our failings instinctively draw him to us.

He presses near. Those verses that we read right at the start. Truly a faint wick he will not snuff out. Truly a bruised reed he will not break.

And the truth is, friends, that we have given Jesus countless reasons to discard us. To go and look for a better team member. To go and look for somebody who would perform better.

And yet none of those reasons have changed his mind about us. He has loved us. And there's one author I read recently put it. This is great.

[14 : 50] Who would have come up with a Jesus? Now here's the thing. Before we think this is simply Jesus saying, Peter let's let bygones be bygones.

And he's sweeping Peter's sin under the carpet. He gives him a slap on the wrist. And he says, denial. What denial? Remember the context of this. Jesus has died on the cross for the sins of his people.

The sin, particularly Peter's situation here. The sin that he knew Peter was going to do. The sin that deserved God's righteous judgment. And for that judgment eternally to rely squarely on his people. Jesus drinks the cup of God's wrath dry. So that you and I do not need to swallow a drop of it if our faith is in him. And Jesus has really risen.

Meaning that the price of our failures, of our sin, that price has been paid and has been paid in full. And that means that that guilty verdict which stood against us out with Jesus now says that it doesn't stand against you.

[15 : 56] Meaning that whatever you've done, the truth is that we cannot out sin the cross of Christ. That our sin is vast but his mercy is more.

Though our shame is deep, his grace is deeper still. And that's the gospel. And this is where we see it in John chapter 21.

You know, Alex and I, we had a few days away to get there recently in North Queensferry. Very exotic place. I remember for the first time in our lives what we did is we crossed the fourth road bridge.

Right? I've never walked across the bridge before. I've lived here pretty much my entire life. And I remember going across that bridge when it was open. But today, that bridge only takes larger vehicles.

Right? You might know that. So actually when we're walking across this bridge, it was a very peaceful experience. We're like, well this is really, really nice. Every so often what would happen though is that we'd feel the bridge beginning to shake.

[16 : 59] Right? And it seemed that the shaking increased all the time. To the point where we looked at one another and thought, what is going on here? And then we turned around simply to see. Do you know what it was that was causing the shake?

One bus. One bus. And all of a sudden you realise that's why they needed to build the new bridge. Isn't it? And if you look at the new bridge, here's what you'll see.

You'll see three massive towers which are holding the thing together. And here's what you'll read if you go on the website that the bridge has.

You'll read that they spent, to get those towers in place, they spent 15 full days. Continuous days. 24 hour days. 15 days. Pouring concrete down underneath the bridge to get the foundations.

Right? 15 days. And here's what they knew as they learnt from the old bridge. That when the wind comes, and it comes, doesn't it? And when the storms fall over it.

[18 : 00] And the other night, woof, that was a storm. And when the waves batter it. When the traffic rallies across it. The only thing that's going to help that bridge stand against what comes against it.

Is the foundations. It's all about the foundations. And the thing is, as we gaze at Jesus here. Right? And as we take in the full glory of the gospel. This is the concrete of the Christian life. Because here is what, and I was trying to get into this this week.

Is thinking about Peter. Here is what, I reckon, blows his mind. In this moment. As he experiences the joy and the forgiveness and the redeeming grace of Jesus.

Right? He looks at Jesus. And he thinks. If the one I failed. And the one I saw die now lives. And. If coupled with that.

[18 : 56] If he is not against me. He is for me. Bring those two things together. Then my life couldn't be in a better place. I mean friends.

Isn't it interesting when you think about it. Right? That given the role that Jesus knows that Peter is going to play. From this point on in terms of the establishment and the growth of the capital C church.

Right? That the last conversation that these two have. Before Jesus goes to heaven. Is not ten ways to grow the church. Right? Or five steps to be a brilliant leader.

Or the seven most strategic cities to reach for the spread of Christianity. Right? Do you see how the last conversation these two have. With all that going on in the background.

All that in front of them. Is all about Jesus establishing in Peter's mind. His commitment to. And his love for Peter. That's the foundation.

[19 : 53] Of all of this. Is the answer to that question. Do you love me? You know maybe you're watching this. Maybe you're tuning in. You're not a Christian.

You wouldn't call yourself that. You wouldn't say that you follow Jesus. Here's the thing I want you to know. That you will not find a love like this. Anywhere else in your life.

Maybe today is the day where you say. Yes Jesus. I do love you. In a simple way. But you know what? It's not about my. The strength of my faith. It's about who you are. Maybe that's what you need to do today.

Do you know what? Maybe you are a Christian. Let me just ask you. Is your soul. Deeply satisfied. With the deep deep love of Jesus for you.

Maybe once again. You need to open the curtains of your heart. And you need to let the light of his love for you. Flood every square inch. Of it. It's a foundation.

[20 : 58] This is the gospel. This is what we build our lives upon. We build it. Not on ourselves. We build it. On who Christ is. And you see flowing from that foundation.

This is the second thing that I want us to see. Is how Jesus shows us how to follow him. So Jesus goes on. Doesn't he. To talk about how Peter's love for him. How it will manifest itself in his life.

Right. And is it impassionate singing. Is it in fanatic reading. Is it in diligent serving. No. Actually. According to Jesus. How Peter's love for him. Is going to express itself.

Is going to be in two very ordinary ways. Right. It will mean loving his people. Loving Jesus his people. So when Jesus says to Peter. Verse 16 and 17.

He says. What did he say? Feed my lambs. Shepherd my sheep. He's talking about his people. And I want you to see. How much Jesus. Loves. His people.

[21 : 54] His commitment to them. Do you see it? The people that he's purchased. For himself. With his blood. On the cross. What does he say? He's saying isn't he? These are my people. They are precious to me.

They are wonderful to me. And I love them. And he wants Peter to care for them. What job. What task. What a privilege. What a responsibility. To look after them.

To provide for them. To seek them out. To care for them. To wash their feet. To visit them. To listen to them. To know them. To speak to them. To love them. Like Jesus has loved him.

And so here's the pastoral equation. I think we need to see. Love for Jesus. Equals. Love for his people. You know I remember reading.

A biography of John Newton. A few years ago. The English minister. The guy who wrote Amazing Grace. And it was incredible. Because the people. Who lived round about John Newton. Right.

They just saw how he loved people.

[22 : 55] Right. Just everyday people. But particularly people in his church. And how he just welcomed people. Into his home. And the locals round about. Nicknamed his home. The Asylum for the Afflicted.

As he saw how he loved people. And it's a wonderful picture. Isn't it? Of true biblical hospitality. You know I must say some of the stories. That have encouraged me the most.

Over this incredibly difficult season. Of lockdown. As your pastor. Right. The stories that encourage me most. Are the ones where I've. I've heard about the phone calls. Right. And I've heard about the Zoom calls.

And I've heard about the trips. That you've made to one another's houses. And you've waved at the window. Right. And just your way of expressing to one another. That you care for each other. It's wonderful to see.

Because that's the way isn't it. That Jesus says that the world will know. And recognize us. That the way that we love one another. And you see how it's going to mean.

[23 : 53] Bringing the. For Peter here. The green grass of God's word. To God's people. To his flock. So that they can eat and live. And be nourished.

By God's word. You know. As God's spirit. As he brings the. Spiritual nourishment. To the hearts of God's people. Through. The words.

You know. I find. The more I go on in this. Job. Every time I go out. To meet somebody. I take my Bible. And what I love to do. Is just to speak truth to people.

And so often. That the. What I share. Is never just the textbook verses. The ones that they teach you. In seminary. Right. The ones that I've found. Are most effective. Are the ones that I have fed. On in my own soul. That morning. And I'm just passing on. Right. As if to say. From one sheep. Who's. Chewed here. And as has found. Nourishment.

[24 : 48] And great delight here. Would you come and feast here. As well. And enjoy the good shepherd. Isn't it great. Following Jesus. Means loving his people.

Loving his people. And it means carrying your cross. Verse 18 and 19. Jesus lays out. What life is going to be like. From. For Peter. From. This point on.

Do you see what he says. His life will end with. Somebody taking him. To a place. That he does not want to go. Right.

And if we were in any doubt. John adds verse 19. That Jesus is speaking about. His death. The way that he's. Going to die. Right. If you look up church tradition. You'll read that.

Peter died upside down. Right. Didn't feel worthy of being. Crucified like his Lord. During the great fire of Rome. In Nero. 64 BC. Now that may or may not have happened.

[25 : 42] Exactly like that. But. It's almost certain that. When this gospel. Is written. That Peter has lived. And has died. And so this is almost. John's way of seeing.

Jesus knew exactly. What was going to happen. In Peter's life. And the point surely. Is that Peter. Is to go. Is going to glorify God. From this point on.

In his life. All the way through. To his death. A life. And a death. That screams. To the world. That Jesus. Is worth it.

I was praying this week. Right. And. As I. As I kind of responded. To this. My prayer. Was. Lord. Help me. Finish. Strong. Let me go hard.

And let me finish. Well. Finish strong. Do you know. Our lives. They most likely won't. End like Peter's. Right. We most likely won't. Won't be crucified.

[26 : 40] But we have to remember. That that is a. Distinct possibility. For many Christians. Around the world. To own. And bear the name of Jesus. Their story will end like this. But ours might not. And yet the call.

On our lives. As we follow. This man. Is to have our lives. Exclaimed to the world. That he is. Worth it. And to bear his name.

Right to the end. Willingly. Own his name. You know. Many of you might know. Derek Prime. He was the. Former pastor. Of. Charlotte Chapel.

A number of years ago. And he died. And went to be home. With the Lord. Recently. And you know. One of my favorite stories. I heard about him. Was. Right until the very end. Of his life. That he was. In his care home. Presumably. He was still handing out. Gospel tracts. And books. To his carers. And he often told them. About the hymns. That he'd been singing. That morning. And his grandson.

[27 : 34] Andy. Who's a friend of mine. He spoke about. How every time. He went to see his grandpa. It was almost like. Jesus was sitting next to him. In the room. And he's going right. Strong to the end.

And being willing. In life and death. To live a life. That exclaims. That Jesus is worth it. That I willingly. And I love. And I love. Lovingly.

Bear his name. I own his name. I'm with him. Dying. Going strong. For Jesus. So friends. Just as we finish.

Let me ask you again. Where do you run with your regrets? Where do you go with your shame? You see. Here is Peter. He's a man who's experienced.

The transforming. Grace of Jesus. In his life. And he testifies. To the truth. And here's the truth. That failure. Is never final.

[28 : 30] With God. And here's what he writes. In his letter. And you can read this. In 1 Peter 2. Verse 24. Here he is. Writing as a pastor.

Writing to his flock. And he says this. He says. Get your eyes on Jesus. He says. He himself. Bore our sins. In his body. On the cross.

So that. We might die to sins. And live for righteousness. By his wounds. You.

Have. Been. Healed. Where does he take his sheep? He takes them straight to the. The feet of the great physician. He says.

Run to Jesus. He says. He hears. He hears. He hears. What the gospel says. And I want you to hear me clearly. That the scars. From your regrets.

[29 : 25] That. That. That. That. Can often define your life. And who you are. Do they define you? No. What defines you. Rather. Is the scars. That Jesus bore. For us.

On the cross. And that he still. Bears. In his resurrected body. Those are the things. That define. Who we are. The world says. No regrets.

Right. But the gospel says. Something so much better. It says. No condemnation. It says. No thing. Will be able to separate you.

From the love of God. In. Christ Jesus. So friends. Where do we run with our regrets? We run to the son of God. Who loved us. And gave himself for us.

And so I'm going to pray. Just as we close. But here's what I want you to do. I just want you to take a minute. And I just want you to think on these things. We're going to have a few questions after this. But just in this moment of silence.

[30 : 20] I just want you to. Spend time. With your Lord. Just before we close. So Father.

I thank you for your word. That tells us. About your incredible love for us. That sent Jesus. Who is. Love covered over in flesh. And I pray for those of us. Listening today. Who feel. Burdened. And weary. I pray that. The sweetness of the gospel. Would impact their hearts. Father.

Thank you so much for your. Great love for us. Thank you that Jesus. He lives. And he ever. Pleads for us. At your right hand. And so. He is our confidence.

[31 : 33] And it's in his. Precious and worthy name. That we pray. Amen.