

John 21:15-25
March 3rd, 2024

Just a reminder that in two weeks we are going to be beginning a series from the book of Exodus. The sections covered each week will be longer, so it would be great for your family to read the chapters together before church on Sunday. There are flyers with the scripture passages for each week available in the information center in the foyer as well as journals in the bookstore if you'd like to take notes in a journal each week.

Let's pray before we explore these final few verses of John.

Pray

INTRODUCTION

It is beautiful when broken relationships are restored. And nothing in American history is as interesting as the restored relationship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. At first they were close. They were both delegates to the continental congress in 1775 and John Adams personally invited Thomas Jefferson to draft the declaration of Independence. Both men served as diplomats in Europe in the 1780's and upon the death of Jefferson's wife, John Adams and his wife Abigail cared for Jefferson, so he became almost part of their family.

That all changed when they returned to the United States. Jefferson was concerned about a strong central government and moved toward what would ultimately become the Republican party. Adams, on the other hand, wanted a strong central government and aligned himself with the federalist party.

The relationship degraded to the point when in the 1800 presidential campaign, Jefferson supporters accused Adams as having a "hideous hermaphroditical character." Adam's camp accused Jefferson as being a "mean-spirited, low-lived fellow". Both smeared one another in the press and didn't talk for the next 12 years. When Jefferson was elected president in 1800, Adams didn't even attend the inauguration.

That changed in 1812 when Adams sent a short letter to Jefferson in Monticello. Jefferson replied with a friendly letter himself. After that the two began to correspond and penned 158 letters over the next 14 years, and restored their friendship.

You and I were born with not a strained relationship with God but a completely broken relationship. If we are to be saved, then we must be restored to Him. Hopefully, as we explore the complete restoration of Peter, we will better understand how we may be restored to him as well. '

A bit of setting the scene for this interaction:

- They are having a meal together next to the sea of Galilee.
- I imagine that during the meal what was on Peter's mind was the fact that just a couple of weeks earlier he had betrayed Jesus. Saying that he didn't even know Jesus, during his time of greatest need.
- Peter knew he had blown it. I'm sure what was running through his mind was, "Now what does Jesus think about me?"
 - Was Jesus still going to build his church upon Peter, who Jesus called the rock?
 - Peter seemed to have a favored status among the disciples, Jesus took him with James and John to up onto a high mountain to experience Jesus being transfigure.

- Peter was one of three to **witness a girl being raised from the dead.**
- Jesus took Peter with him in the garden of gethsemane to keep watch with Jesus as he struggled with what would happen to him in the coming hours.
- Had Peter ruined his relationship with Jesus?

- After the meal from verse 20 we know that Jesus pulls Peter aside and talks with him, in all likelihood privately.

Big Idea: We are going to explore the complete restoration of Peter in three parts this morning:

1. Peter is Restored to Jesus.
2. Peter is Restored to Shepherd.
3. Peter is restored to the end.

So Lets begin by exploring

I. Peter restored to Jesus – Why was Peter restored?

a. Peter was restored because he was humbled.

There are hints that Peter was humbled from verse 15:

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.”

There are clues just from this verse that Jesus was talking to a greatly humbled Peter.

Jesus uses Peter’s original name; the name he had before Jesus changed it and said that Peter would be the Rock upon which he would build his church. Jesus said “Simon, son of John.” And Peter didn’t balk at this. He received it.

Peter demonstrates he’s been humbled in another way from this one verse:

Jesus then asks Simon whether he **loved him more than these**. Most commentators agree from the context that the “more than these” are the other disciples. “Do you love me more than these other disciples?” Why? Well, roughly two weeks earlier, Just after Jesus and His disciples had a final meal together, they were headed to the Mt. of Olives, In Matthew its recorded that Jesus tells the disciples that they would all fall away from him that night. Peter says in front of them all:

³³ Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” ³⁴ Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” ³⁵ Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the disciples said the same. *Matt 26*

As Peter considers Jesus’ question: “**Do you love me more than these?**” I’m sure that Peter’s mind goes back to that evening, and realizes that he was no better than any of the other disciples. Not only did Peter fall away, but he actively denied he even knew Jesus.

Again, Peter’s response showed he was a greatly humbled man. He didn’t justify himself. He didn’t argue his case before Jesus. What more could Peter say to convince Jesus that he loved him? He didn’t even try, but said “Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.” He is relying on Jesus to decide for him whether or not Peter loved him.

Brothers and Sisters how important humility is to our following Jesus!

Illustration: Coaches understand this! If you have a humble athlete, they are coachable, teachable, they don’t know it all. They don’t rely on themselves, but on others. Humble athletes are better teammates! They are eager to submit to your leadership. This is where life circumstances brought Peter. All of the grandiose ideas of Peter dying with Jesus, were from his own

reserves of strength. Peter came to an end of himself and turned to Jesus alone to be restored. Jesus was the only one who could restore him!

Application: Brothers and sisters how is your disposition as you approach God?

- Do you think that there is anything about you that makes you acceptable to Him?
- Do you think there anything in your own strengths that you have been endowed with that can do anything to build Jesus' Kingdom?
- If there is anything about yourself that makes you acceptable to God, then He would not have needed to send His own Son as a sacrifice on your behalf.
- If there was anything you could do to build God's kingdom in your own strength, then there would be no need to be connected to Jesus.

In truth, there is NOTHING acceptable about you or me that would earn our being restored to God. And our own storehouse of strength that we have been endowed with can do nothing to build Jesus' Kingdom.

I'm confident this is why God often puts us through difficult times. So that we would come to an end of our own storehouses of strength and turn to Jesus, because

EVERYTHING Jesus did in his perfect life, death, and resurrection makes Him the ONLY one who can restore broken people like you and me.

b. How do we know Peter was restored? Because Peter had a genuine love for Jesus.

Let's pick up the conversation in verse 16:

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."

The word for love here is the Greek word **φιλέω, *philéō***.

- It means someone is:
 - Loved
 - Dear to you
 - A friend
 - That you have great affection for the person.
 - That you have fondness for a person.
- In fact, φιλέω is the word used in the new testament whenever describing the disciples' love for Jesus.
- This was Peter's love toward Jesus. Jesus was his friend, and he had great affection for his friend. Though Peter failed Jesus in his greatest need. That didn't characterize Peter's overall love for Jesus.

My temptation here is to tell you that if you love God, you'll be restored to Him. But that relies primarily on OUR ability to love. I don't want to base my salvation on my ability to love God. And I know that my own love for God waxes and wanes. Some days I feel more affection for Jesus. Some days I don't. Our relationship with God must be based on more solid stuff if we are to have joy in the Christian life!

Our salvation is not based on our ability to love God, but on His love for us!

1 John 4:19 says: **We love because he first loved us.** Any love we have for him comes after God demonstrated His love for us by sending his own Son Jesus to live a perfect life and take the penalty for sin that we deserve!

Romans 5:8 says: **“...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

How do we apply this to be reconciled to God? Do not root your salvation on your ability to love God (which changes all the time), but on God’s love for you as demonstrated by God sending his son as a sacrifice for you. The Cross is God’s ultimate act of love for you! Put your faith and trust in Jesus’ sacrifice for you rather than how much you love Him on any given day.

How do you do this? Preach the gospel to yourself everyday. Recount daily God’s love for you in the Cross of Christ. Paul said to the Corinthians **“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”** (1 Cor. 2:2) Study the cross, meditate on it, make it the center of your thinking and you will find that your affection for God increases, your love for him will increase.

This leads us to our second restoration: Besides being restored to Jesus,

II. Peter restored to shepherd.

a. Who was Peter restored to shepherd? Jesus’ most prized possession: His sheep.

Illustration – Now I love old cars. And I have a 1965 Ford F100 that I love. My wife hates that truck. Its loud, bumpy, it breaks down often. Its very uncomfortable to drive in. But I love driving it because others who also love old trucks always give me the thumbs up when I drive by. The old timers salute me! My wife hates that. Now if I were going to give my truck to someone, I probably wouldn’t give it to my wife, because I know she doesn’t love my truck. She would probably immediately sell it to someone else to get it off our property.

When it comes to our most precious possessions, we want to give them to people who will love them too!

When Jesus says to Peter “Feed my Lambs.”, and “Tend my sheep.”, and “Feed my sheep.” He’s giving a charge to Peter to care for his most valued possession, which are his sheep. Remember Jesus had just given his life for his sheep. In John 10 Jesus describes himself:

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

But how was Peter to care for Jesus’ most prized possessions?

b. Peter restored to feed and tend the sheep:

Peter was not called to an office. He was not called to a position. Peter was not called to be the first Pope. He was not called to a high church office. He was called to the very inglorious job of taking care of sheep. He was to be a shepherd.

I don't have sheep but I have two goats. In my mind I had the picture of the little goats that are hopping and jumping up on stuff. And being cute and cuddly with the grandchildren. But I don't have these kind of goats. They grew up. Now I have big, nasty goats.

They bite one another.

Fight for food.

Charlie often rams Penelope.

I have to protect them. The neighbor's dogs got to them one time. They will eat everything and often will eat stuff that will kill them. Its not an easy job.

When Peter was given this charge from Jesus, it was not for a life of glory but a life of sacrifice. Long nights, dangerous journeys,

It was a life of doing what Jesus did for his sheep. laying down his life for Jesus' sheep. Peter was an under-shepherd.

This is important: Peter was an under-shepherd not in Jesus' place, but in His strength!

This is why the question "do you love me." Comes before the command to tend and feed Jesus' sheep.

Some commentators think that Jesus repeats the Question "Simon, son of John, do you love me." Three times because that was how many times Peter denied our Lord. This is very likely true. But I think that the three connections between loving God and tending his sheep, makes it more likely that Jesus is emphasizing to Peter, "**You can only care for my sheep if you love me.**"

That's why Peter some 30 years later recognizes the connection between loving God and tending for and feeding Jesus' sheep:

1 Peter 4

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter learned that the only way he could care for Jesus' sheep was if he were receiving gifts from God himself to feed and tend to the sheep.

Listen brothers and sisters, we must know what we are reconciled to! We are not reconciled hold positions of power, or some status within the church, or enjoy the financial or social benefits of being in the church.

We were reconciled to tend and feed His sheep. To care for them. ALSO!!!! We are called to go out among the world and call His sheep that are not yet in his fold: This is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 5:

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. 2 Cor 5

Application

The same is true for you and me. Thought Peter had a significant role in the development of the church, a love for God always leads to caring for what is most precious to God: his Sheep.

So how do you care for God's sheep. Are you serving the body? Are you tending to the needs of others? Are you involved with feeding others with the truths of God's word? Are you evangelizing your friends and family members who do not know Christ? There are sheep that belong to God that are not yet in his fold. God makes his appeal to them through you. Do you love God?

TRANSITION

This brings us to the third thing that Peter was restored to ...
So we've explored that Peter was restored to Jesus,
From that restored relationship, he was restored to shepherd Jesus' sheep.

Finally:

III. Peter was restored to the end:

Look with me at verses 18-23

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.

This I'm sure was both very comforting to Peter, but also quite sobering.

Comforting in that Peter knew that he would, by God's grace, remain faithful to Jesus until the very end of his life. That what he said to Jesus about two weeks earlier he would actually fulfill: "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" Now when Peter originally said this, he said it in his own strength and he failed.

Now Jesus is telling him that he will indeed follow Him, which would ultimately lead to his death. But this time with power that only comes from following Jesus.

Peter carried this knowledge around with him for over 30 years before he was martyred the same way Jesus was – on a Roman cross.

How does this relate to our following Jesus today? Don't you know that when you put your faith in Jesus you are heading down the same road that every disciple has gone down through history?

If you would be a follower of Christ you must take up a cross:

²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Luke 14

In the United States it is unlikely that we will die for our faith. But as followers of Jesus, our lives are filled with thousands of mini-deaths. Where we are saying no to our flesh that wants its own way:

-
- Our flesh may want to respond harshly to our children or spouse. Carrying your cross means following Jesus and with his strength responding lovingly.
 - Our flesh may want to view pornography. Carrying your cross means to not do that. Carrying your cross means to follow Jesus, and with His strength overcome sin. To get covenant eyes on your computer and only watch videos through vid-angel. Get another saint to hold you accountable. Or not watch Netflix at all.
 - Our flesh may want to avoid having that uncomfortable conversation with our neighbor, to share the gospel with him or her. Carrying your cross means to pray that God would speak through you and go to the fence, when he is outside working in the yard.
-

Most of us hope that if the opportunity afforded itself, we would give our lives for the gospel. But we don't really live there on a day-to-day basis. How about taking up your cross and having a conversation with your neighbor about the gospel? How about taking up your cross and visiting with an elderly saint who has lost her husband?

If you don't or can't do these small things, it is unlikely that you would die for him if the opportunity afforded itself.

Let me ask you: do you take up your cross to follow Jesus? All of us have areas where we must die to ourselves to follow Him.

But I know for myself, I get caught up with the exact same trap that Peter fell into:

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!"

I love Jesus' reply. Its essentially "Peter mind your own business and follow me!"

Finish

On July 3rd, 1826, exactly 50 years after the adoption of the declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, was suffering from an intestinal illness and slipped into a coma that lasted until just after 12:00pm on July 4th at which point he passed away. That same day (July 4th) John Adams collapsed in his reading chair around the same time Thomas Jefferson died. He regained consciousness briefly at about 5:30 that evening and uttered his last words: "Thomas Jefferson still lives" before dying himself. The relationship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson was such that Jefferson was the last thing on his mind at the end of his life.

A restored friendship is a beautiful thing. I'm sure as Peter suffered on a Roman Cross 30 years after being restored to Jesus, he was reminded of the words he wrote to the Jesus' sheep:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ¹ Peter 1

Lets Pray.

Discussion Group Questions:

Big Idea: The complete restoration of Peter

Point 1: Peter restored to Jesus.

1. Why is humility important in our being restored to God?
2. What role does your love for God play in being restored to him?

Point 2: Peter restored to shepherd.

1. Why is loving God necessary for feeding and tending his sheep?
2. Who are the sheep that God has placed in your life to care for?

Point 3: Peter restored to the end.

3. Why must we deny ourselves and take up our cross to be a follower of Jesus?
4. Why is looking at another person's cross inadvisable as a Christian? How do we fall into this trap?
5. What cross(es) are you currently bearing? How can we encourage one another to bear them?