

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Fully Alive

PART

51

TITLE

Restored And Sent

SCRIPTURE

John 21:1-25



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If you're a guest with us, welcome. If you're here, or perhaps at home on the livestream, or in the amphitheater, welcome. We've all are so glad that you've joined us as well, but I want to ask if you would, turn with me to John Chapter 21 in your Bible. If you don't have one with you, there should be one near you, in a seat near you, and if you don't have at home, please take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have it. If you are wanting to keep score, this is I believe sermon 56 in the book of John, and it happens to be the last one. We're rounding third, and yeah, already. We're rounding third. We're going to slide into home today, but John Chapter 21. I pray and have been praying for a long period of time that this book will have its effect in our lives. His passion is that we would see by what he has written, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing that we would have life in His Name.

Our prayer has been that our lives would be changed, that fullness of life, that joy in life, would be increased, would be magnified as we've walked through this book as a family of faith. John Chapter 21 is a remarkable conclusion to a book that talks, that now that Jesus rose from the dead, His work is not done, because now His work is to restore you, and to restore me, and the peoples throughout the face of the earth to Him, because of what He has accomplished. Let's pray together, okay? Father in heaven, as we open Your Word, we confess to You that we are in need of You. We need You to connect the dots in our heart that help us to see that this is true, that it's consequential, so would you help us today? Would you speak through weakness, and bring glory to Jesus Christ as we see not only that He rose from the dead, but You restore people who are living in shame, and that's many of us. I pray that You would begin that work in our own hearts today. We need You. I need You, I pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Let's start with The Lion King, okay? I know it's been a while. Exactly. Lion King. Doesn't that sound cool? In The Lion King, there's this scene that's really, really fascinating, and it's when the king lion, Mufasa, dies, okay? If you've not seen it, okay, this is a little picture of it, okay? What happens, right, is Simba, who's the small lion there, who's the next king, he went to a place that his dad, who's dead in this scene, told him not to go, and in rescuing him, there was a plot by the guy, his name is Scar over on the right, to actually kill Mufasa, and Simba believed that it was entirely his fault. Though he did contribute, because he went where his dad said, "Don't go." What I want you to see, and if you could think back on the story, right, is that much greater and more evil forces were at play in the death of his dad, but when Simba saw how his defiance contributed to the chaos of the moment that took his dad's life, he ran away in shame.

He didn't go and live the worst life ever, right? He made some fun friends, and sang some fun songs, but the fact is, right, is that he was living miles away from where he needed to be, and where people needed him to be. He was surrounding himself with tremendous distraction in order to cover the shame within his own heart. This is precisely what we find in a real man named Peter. Peter was an amazing disciple of Jesus. He was one of the first men that Jesus called to follow Him, and near the end, if you remember, we looked at, Jesus told Peter in front of all of the disciples ... In fact, He first said to all of them, He says, "The shepherd's gonna be struck tonight, and sheep are gonna scatter." Peter comes back and he goes, "I want you to know something, Jesus.

Even if all the rest of these guys, they all fall away from You, one thing You can count on, and that's me. I will never fall away. In fact, I will never deny You. I will be with You to the end, even if it means I have to die with You. You can count on me."

Jesus said, "Before the rooster crows in the morning, you will have denied Me three times," and Peter disagrees with Him. Fast forward just a few hours from that moment, and we're told that Peter, while Jesus is standing trial, is in the same courtyard, and he's warming himself up by a charcoal fire. There he's asked, "Hey, aren't you one of His disciples?" One time, he said, "No." Second time, he said, "No," and then the third time, it says that he denied Jesus with oaths and curses. In other word, Peter says, "May God strike me dead if I knew Jesus Christ or I was one of His disciples." At that very moment, when Jesus was literally being slapped, and punched, and spit upon, it says that Jesus turned His head, and looked, and connected eyes with Peter, and Peter ran away in shame. You see, greater forces were at play in the death of Jesus Christ, but when Peter saw how his sin contributed to the chaos, he, too, ran in shame.

Here in John 21, what we find is Jesus' restoration of Peter, and not only Peter. We find here how He restores us. People like you, and people like me, who know regret, and shame, and guilt because of our sin. In Verse 1 of John 21, it says, "After this, Jesus, He revealed Himself again to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberius, and He revealed Himself in this way," and in Verse 2, John wants to tell us who the characters were there. He said, "Well, there was Simon Peter, and there was Thomas, Nathaniel, the sons of Zebedee, James and John, and then two others," and then we get to Verse 3, and this is what it says happened. Simon Peter said to them, "I'm going fishing," and they said to him, "We'll go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, yet it says His 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." 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 land, about 100 yards off. When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread, and Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." 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," but none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?" For they knew it was the Lord.

Jesus came and took bread, and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus was revealed to His disciples after He was raised from the dead. 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?" 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. After saying this, He said to him, "Follow me." Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them. The one who also had leaned back against Him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that's going to betray You?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "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. He finally reveals himself, who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things. We know that his testimony is true. There are also many other things that Jesus did, and were every one of them to be written? I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

As we've done, week after week through this series, John's passion is to tell us things about Jesus, and so I want to share with you three more truths about Jesus and His glory, His kindness, His goodness, in the hopes that we would believe them, and our life would be transformed. The first is that Jesus pursues those in need of restoration. When there is a gap between God and people, it is God who fills the gap. He's the one who runs to us, because He knows we can't and won't run to Him. You see, God was not done with Peter, which is why God sent an angel to the empty tomb to tell Mary these words. Mary, go tell His disciples and Peter. Peter was one of the disciples, but God wanted to Peter to know, and so He put special emphasis. Make sure Peter gets this word. He needs to meet Me up in Galilee, and that's where John 21's taking place, the Sea of Tiberius, the Sea of Galilee. Peter's up there. They're all up there.

Peter has now seen Jesus alive after His death and burial twice, but there's been no reconciliation in either of those times, and as a result of that, shame continues to fill his heart, and so he needs to distract himself, so what does he do? He looks at his buddies, and he says, "I'm going fishing. I'm going fishing." It's an interesting thing, because there's a lot of people who believe that this was a career move driven by shame. You see, Peter was once a fisherman, a professional fisherman.

That was his occupation. That's how he made a living. Jesus comes to him, and He says, "This is all great and all, but come follow Me, and I'm gonna make you fishers of men," and it says that Peter left everything, and he began to follow Him for three years. Now he has interacted with Jesus on two different occasions after this tremendous sin and denial. Shame is filling his heart. Jesus has not mended it with him. He has not mended it with Jesus.

Maybe he got to the place where he said, "Well, that road is sort of a dead end, so maybe I should go back to fishing," so he says, "I'm going fishing," and they say, "Well, I'll tell you what. We'll go with you," and it says they caught nothing. Listen to me. Sometimes we know God is moving towards us because life isn't working. Jesus has authority. He's about to let him catch 153 fish. They caught nothing, and this is one way that Jesus is moving toward him, and this is some ways, many ways, most often in our life, this is how He moves towards us. You see, some of you, life just isn't working, and some of you, maybe how God got ahold of my heart when I was 16, life seemed to be working really well, and yet my heart was not working in response to it. I remember in high school I received an award for athletics, and it was supposed to be the most significant award of the whole school. I got home that night and I said, "God, is this really it? This isn't the point. I still don't have peace and contentment in my heart. I've worked so long to get this, and now this doesn't matter."

Shortly thereafter, a man named Hank Gathered died on a basketball court, and I was watching that game, and I remember I turned it off, and I went into my room, and I was 16 years old. This is the night that I came to faith in Christ, and I remember, I felt like Christ met me in my room. It's not that everything in my life was a train wreck. It's that my heart was responding to every good thing as if it was. I wasn't happy. I wasn't at peace. I remember at that very moment, I said, "God, I believe that You're moving toward me, even in the death of another man that just got my attention," and that night, I prayed to receive Christ, and it's an amazing thing that Christ began at that moment to restore my joy, to restore my hope, to restore me, because I was not reconciled to Him. They caught nothing. Suddenly, we're told that Jesus is on the shore, but they don't recognize Jesus. They just think it's a stranger who's out for a walk one day, who's on the shore.

This is amazing to me, that after His resurrection, He's standing right in front of people, and they just don't recognize Him. Remember John 20? Mary's at the tomb, angel talks. Why are you crying? She's so disturbed. They took his body. She turns around, runs into Jesus thinking He's a gardener. I don't know if He was clipping bushes, but I'm not sure exactly what's happened, but He turns and He says this. He goes, "Woman, why are you crying?" He knows why she's crying, and then He asks her, "Who are you looking for?" He knows who she's looking for. Finally, she says, He says, "Mary," and all of a sudden, her eyes are open. Jesus. The same thing happens in Luke Chapter 24. Jesus finds two of His own disciples walking on a road to Emmaus, and He walks up to them, and He goes, "Hey, guys. What are you talking about?" He knows what they're talking about, and they say to Him ... I love it, because they don't recognize him.

“Are you the only person unaware of what’s happening at this time?” Jesus goes, “Who? What things have happened?” Right? Two of His own disciples begin to proceed, to tell Jesus about His death. Jesus says, “Tell Me more,” until He opens up their eyes, and sees, and there’s Jesus. He’s standing on the side, and they don’t recognize Him, and He calls out, “Children, do you have any fish?” It’s interesting. In Greek, you can see verbs, and tenses, and there’s certain ways you can ask a question that implies a negative answer. In other words, what Jesus was really saying, I believe is, “You don’t have any fish, do you?” Frustrated after a whole night of fishing, they call out, “No, we don’t have any fish,” and listen to me. Jesus is pursuing by recreating. He’s going to recreate two events in Peter’s life. The first even is how their relationship began, and the second is how their relationship is fractured.

You see, in Luke Chapter 5, three years before that, Peter had a really rough night fishing. He caught nothing, and Jesus walks up upon him. He’s cleaning out his net. He’s got no fish. He’s discouraged. He’s cold. He’s tired. He wants breakfast. He goes, “Actually need a podium, so can we just push your boat out? I’ll preach from there for all the people on the shore.” They get out there, and He’s talking. All of a sudden, He turns, and He goes, “You know what, Peter? This would be a great place to drop your net.” Peter’s like, “All right, look, carpenter, professional fisherman, professional carpenter, right? Fisherman, carpenter. All right. Whatever.” He throws the net in, and all of a sudden, there’s so many fish that come that he calls out to another boat and says, “You guys got to come over here and help me get all these fish out.” Peter forgets where he’s at, and who’s in his boat, and he’s just lugging in fish. He’s just so happy. He said, “This is the greatest day of my life.”

All of a sudden, he remembers at that very moment that there’s a man in his boat. It’s Jesus, and Luke Chapter 5 says that he looks up, he sees Jesus, and then he drops to his knees, and He says, “Go away from me, because I’m not a good person.” Jesus says, “Nope. Not gonna go away from me. From now on, you are Mine. I’m committing My life to you. You’re gonna follow Me. I’ve got a plan for you. You have hope, Peter.” Now three years have passed, and now Jesus recreates the greatest fishing day in the world. The stranger from the side yells out, “Why don’t you cast the net on the other side?” Suddenly, 153 fish decide to jump into their net. John, he recognizes what’s going on. He looks up again and goes, “That’s no stranger,” and notice who he talks to. He doesn’t just say, “Hey, guess what guys? It’s the Lord.” He goes, “Peter. Peter. It’s Jesus.” He’s so overwhelmed. I just love how John adds this. He goes, “He was fishing naked, so he had to put his clothes back on.”

He’s so overwhelmed that he says he put his outer garment back on and jumped into the water. I love Verse 8, because John adds like the editor. He goes, “You know, the fact is, we weren’t that far, and so we rode like three, four times. We were cheering for Peter, ‘Go. You’re gonna make it. You’re gonna make it.’ So we get there at the same time.” Check out what happens. This is amazing, okay? He’s just recreated the event of how Jesus began the relationship with them, and now He’s going to recreate how that relationship, or a particular part of that relationship, of how it was fractured. See, there’s lots of different kinds of fires in the Bible, but there’s only two times in the whole Bible where it says that there was a charcoal fire.

One time was right here in John 21, and the other is in John 18:18, where it says that Peter, in the courtyard, was warming himself at the arrest and trial of Jesus at a charcoal fire, when a little girl looked up and said, "Aren't you one of His disciples?"

Imagine Jesus that day getting ready for this event. He's got to shop for some fuel. He's got to get things ready. He goes to the store, and He goes, "You know what? This split pine wood, this would make for a great fire. No, I ... You got any charcoal? I need some charcoal. I have intent with this fire." Imagine Peter comes up, and all of a sudden he sees it. Jesus's like, "Hey, Peter. This smell familiar?" I think what He's doing is saying, "Peter, I'm running to you because My door is not closed to you." If Jesus pursues those in need of restoration, Providence, let's try to see how Jesus moves towards us. Let's try to recognize and strain with our eyes, our spiritual eyes to be able to see the different ways that Jesus is moving toward us today. You see, when Jesus entered our broken world, He came broken so that we who are broken could be made whole. That wasn't the only time Jesus has done good things for us. He continues to do that.

You see, the Bible tells us that even today, Jesus is creating events to get our attention. Some of you know this. In your own life, something happened that got your attention, whether it was a sickness, or a miracle, or something got ... He's not blind to those things. Second Samuel 14:14 says, "God devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast." God is there. He's looking at the people who are separated from Him, and He's saying, "I'm gonna develop, I'm gonna orchestrate out of the resources in the world, out of the events in the world, I'm gonna orchestrate a means, an event, a circumstance in order to bring someone who's banished from Me back to Me." This is what He does. He creates events. He also speaks to us. Have you ever felt like one particular scripture ... You're reading the Bible, or maybe it's a sermon where you feel like the pastor or the preacher just was reading your mail, and it's like, man, it's just amazing how relevant that is to my life right now.

That's the situation, my ... That's Jesus speaking to you. Perhaps the most penetrating time that's ever happened in my life, I was 19 years old. I had a speech impediment, a terrible speech impediment, and I signed up to go on a mission trip. I went to the first team meeting, and the guy says to me, he goes, "Now all the guys here, you're gonna have to preach at least one sermon when we're over in Africa." I just said, "That's not gonna happen, so I guess I'm not gonna go." I just decided, well, wait until it's over, and I might as well read by Bible reading plan. I was in Exodus Chapter 1, so I just opened back up to Exodus Chapter 1 and kept reading. All of a sudden, it gets to a man. His name is Moses, and God's like, "Hey, Moses. I got a task for you." All of a sudden, Moses starts giving Him excuses why he can't do it. The one of them is, God, you know I'm not eloquent in speech. I got a speech impediment. I'm not a good orator.

All of a sudden, I'm like looking around the room. I'm thinking, "Wait a minute. These two things cannot be coincidence. This meeting, this day, this Bible reading playing this day. Are you kidding me?" All of a sudden, God says to Moses, "Moses, Who made your mouth? Is it not I the Lord? Now go and speak, and I will show you what to say, and I'll help you say it." At that moment, I said, "God, I'm gonna try to trust Your Word. Be honest with You, I don't think You can pull this off, but I'm gonna do it anyway." God literally transformed my life that moment. He speaks to us. He speaks to you. Open up His Word. You'll be startled at what takes place in your life. Something else He does is He convicts us when we sin. See, when we're in sin, He doesn't like that, because we're moving away from Him. The most unleavened thing He could do would be not to convict us so that we would continue to walk away from Him and not know it.

What He does is He convicts us of sin. David speaks of what it feels like when God convicts us of sin. In Psalm 32, Verse 4 he says, "Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me." I like to think of it like I'm a piece of wood. God has a screwdriver, and there's a screw, right? Sort of like this, and when I sin, God loves me too much, so what He does is He takes that screwdriver. He puts his hand in. He begins to convict us, and He starts tightening, and all of a sudden that screw begins to penetrate into our conscious, into our heart, into our mind, and all of a sudden, we feel it. It feels like His hand is heavy upon us, and we have to understand, what is His intent at that goal, at that time? What's His goal in convicting? Here's his goal. It's always this. Whenever God convicts, His aim is to bring healing through repentance. In other words, once we repent, and we say, "God, I get it. I confess it a sin. I'm not gonna move this way anymore. I'm gonna turn. I'm gonna go this way," God takes His hand off of the screwdriver, and that's precisely when Satan grabs hold.

You see, Satan also likes to convict us. He likes to convict us so that we go off into far places, and distract ourself from our shame. He has a goal, and his goal is to bring hopelessness through accusation, so God brings healing through repentance. Satan brings hopelessness through accusation, and he starts saying things like, "You know, you're never gonna be used. You're a disgrace. You need to run away, and hide in the shadows, and never return." This is when Jesus does another thing to draw near us, is that when He knows that Satan is hounding us, He gives us promises. Romans 8:33 says, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God Who justifies." God is telling us that if we've trusted in His Son, His Son's righteousness has been given to us. We've been justified. He looks at us and He says, "You're totally innocent," and so God does not allow anybody or anything to lodge a single accusation in His presence about you.

He says to us this promise, in order to tell us, "Look, I'm not living wondering what I'm going to do with you, because I view you as innocent, and so I don't want you to live in the shadows of what God is gonna do to you, because you're already innocent in My sight." Isn't that amazing? See, this is how Jesus moves to us, and He does all of this in order to draw us to Himself. The second thing that He does, He not only pursues those in need of restoration. He restores those imprisoned in shame. I want you to just imagine this breakfast, okay? Peter is tired. He's been up all night. He's totally wet. He's soaked, all of his clothes. He's embarrassed, because he's with the very men in front of Jesus, that he said, "My love is gonna outlast theirs." He knows that they know that didn't happen. He's also guilty. He's feeling it.

You talk about the elephant in the room, everybody's like, man, we've ... Breakfast time. We've already seen Him twice. This is a third time. Peter.

I can see the side conversation. Just go say you're sorry already. Come on. This is awkward. It's uncomfortable for all of us. Go reconcile, all right? You know what Thanksgiving's like, when two people aren't reconciled. You're like, "Just please, like, it's turkey day. Come on. Go say you're sorry," and this is where they're at. It's breakfast time, and suddenly there's no talking until the silence breaks, and the silence breaks with Jesus' voice, and he says, "Simon, son of John." If you remember back to John Chapter 1, Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. Peter means rock. He said, "Peter, I'm gonna start calling you what I'm gonna make you. I know you're gonna become a rock of a man, a man of character, and integrity, and strength that's gonna serve people, so I'm just gonna start calling you what I know you're gonna become." Every time Peter began to live like the old man, Jesus gave him a little reminder, and He'd call him by his old name.

Here, there's no talking, and all of a sudden Jesus says, "Simon, son of John." That moment, I can just see all the other guys begin to chew a little bit slower, like, all right. It's about to go down. Here it is. How's it going to play out? Do you love me more than these? People debate over what these is. Is it the fish? Really? You're going to go back to fishing? Some people are like, do you love me more than you love your friends here? Some people think, well, do you love me more than these people love me, these guys love me? We don't necessarily know exactly what Jesus had in mind there, but what we do know is this. Three times, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Three times, Peter says, "Yes," and three times, Peter then entrusts what's really important to Him, His flock, to his hands. It's really important for us to see that Jesus did the work of reconciliation, and initiated the reconciliation, even though Peter did the work of sin.

You see, had Jesus not initiated reconciliation with Peter, every morning Peter woke to a rooster would've been a clarion call of his failure again, and again, and again, and so what we find is Jesus here doing three things. He says first of all that Jesus initiated. Jesus knew that being reconciled is better than being right. He knew that being reconciled in relationship is better than being right. Many of us need to learn this. We care more about being right than being together, and so Jesus, He's the one who initiated. Peter's the one who did the sin. It should've been him to come to Him in courage and say, "You know what? I was wrong. Would You forgive me?" Jesus said, "You know what? You can't do that, so I'm gonna take those steps for you. I'm gonna come to you and fill the gap between where I am and where you are." The second thing I think that we see is that Jesus took the humble place. I'll be just totally honest with you. Scholars debate the significance of what I'm about to tell you, but I personally think that it's formative.

I think that there's something in there that's true, and that's real, and that's helpful to us. See, there's four different words in Greek that are all tran ... Actually, there's maybe five that are all translated into one English word, love. One word is phileo, right, the love of a brother. Philadelphia, right? Another is agape. It's for unconditional love. It's the kind of love that God has for us. If you had eyes to read Greek, and you could look down, this is how those questions actually went down, okay? First question. Peter, do you agape Me? Jesus, you know that I phileo You. All right? Why don't you feed my sheep? Second question. Peter, or actually Simon, son of John, do you agape Me? You know I phileo You. The third question comes. Jesus could've said, "Now, listen, Peter. I don't think you understand I just died to keep you out of hell. There's only one right answer here. The answer is yes."

Instead of forcing Simon Peter to move to a place where he wasn't ready, whether it was because of the guilt in his own heart, and saying, "Well, You already know the answer, because I've just denied You, so maybe I don't." I don't know why he couldn't answer right. I just know what the right answer was. For every one of us, the answer is that Jesus Christ says, "Do you love Me unconditionally?" There is only one right answer that it should be, and that is yes. Yes, You died for me to keep me out of hell. You rescued me. That's the right answer, but instead, Jesus moves. He takes the low place, and the third question sounded like this. Peter, or Simon, son of John, do you phileo Me? Peter's like, thank God. You know all things. You know that I phileo You. Jesus is the one that's filling the gap of separation between Peter and Himself. The third thing Jesus does is entrust what's valuable to Peter's care.

Acts Chapter 20 tells us there's only one thing that's been formed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and that's the church, His flock, His sheep. Here, Jesus is entrusting that which He created from His own blood to the hands of Peter. Providence, let's rejoice that God gently restores, that He fills the gap, that He runs to us. No matter what you've done, you're not beyond the reach of God's grace. He came, He died, and He rose from the dead, and He extends you an invitation that if you and I, if we will trust Him, and believe in Him, He will forgive us of our sin. He wants to restore you today. He wants to forgive you today. He wants to bring you back to the place to where you're desperately needed. The third thing I want you to see and last ... We're almost done, is that Jesus sends those He restores. He pursues those who are in need of restoration. He restores those when He gets there who are plagued by shame, but then He does one other thing with those after He restores us, and that is that He sends us.

You see, in every other religion, the invitation is this. It's impress me. Prove yourself to me. Earn your way into my presence, but not with Jesus, and not Christianity. His invitation is, follow me. This is the way that Jesus started the whole relationship with Peter. Come follow Me, and I'll make you fishers of men, and here at the end, Jesus comes to Peter and He says, "Peter, listen. I want you to follow Me, but let me tell you what the road is gonna cost. When you were young, you did what you wanted. You went where you wanted, you said what you wanted, but the day is coming when you're gonna be carried against your will, and they're gonna stretch out your hands."

The last time he saw anyone's hands stretched out was Jesus on the cross, and John gives commentary, and he goes, "Yup. You got it." He was telling him the way that He was going to die, and that that way is how God would be glorified. You see, Peter, we're told from tradition, he was hung on a cross, upside down for his faith, his unrelenting faith in Jesus Christ.

What Jesus is doing here is this. He's teaching that the Christian road is difficult, and He's testing to see if He is valuable enough to us that we're willing to endure that road. You see, the very next thing that happens is Peter does what we do. When we're afraid, we want to make sure it's fair, so he looks over at John, and he goes, "Well, what about him? What's your plan for him? Our plan doesn't sound so good. What's his plan? Is it fair? Does he get a boat and I get a cross? How does that work?" Jesus says, "It just doesn't matter to you what My plan is for him. You follow Me." This is precisely what Jesus had said to Peter. He said, "Peter, you're gonna sin." This is in Luke Chapter 22, Verse 32. He says, "You're gonna deny Me." Then He says this. "When you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." In other words, even at the moment where Jesus was predicting his sin, He was also predicting his repentance and his future calling in ministry. Your job is to strengthen your brothers.

In other words he says, "Look, Peter. I know you're gonna blow it, and you're gonna think that you're cut off from My plan, but that's not the case, for when you have repented, you are gonna be uniquely equipped to talk about My grace that's found in the gospel, that's applicable to everybody that you talk to." This is exactly what Peter did, for he wrote two letters at the end of the Bible, at least near the end of the Bible. In the first letter, the first section of it, there's no instruction, there's no imperative, there's command. All it is is Peter gushing in wonder and worship over the fact that he is forgiven of his sin, that he's been saved, that he's been rescued, that we have been rescued. He spends his entire letter trying to strengthen the church that's been scattered because of persecution, and he begins by saying, "Just be amazed that He saved you, that He rescued you, that He came, that He did all of this for you."

Providence, if Jesus sends those He restores, they must be willing to go with the gospel. See, the whole book of John is written to help us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, they find fullness of life, and they find a life purpose, a life calling. That is to use all of our time, and all of our gifts, and all of our energies, and all of our occupations, and expertise, and resources in order to extend the gospel of Jesus to other people, so they can believe in Jesus, and they can receive fullness of life. We all have a part to play in this, and even this week, there's things that you can do. There's things you can do this week. You can begin to try to form a relationship with somebody who doesn't know the Lord. You can aim this week, maybe to try to share the gospel with somebody, to try to enter a spiritual conversation. This week, you can pray for people who don't know the Lord. You can pray for missionaries who are out seeking to tell people who don't know the Lord.

You can give this week financially in order to help other people who want to go on a mission trip, the opportunity to go so they can tell. Even this week, you can sign up for a short-term mission trip. Right now at Providence, there's four teams. Actually, there's lots of teams, but there's four of them that actually need people. I want to show you exactly what those are. Romania, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, Boston. You can get all the information back at Next Steps on all of these, but you look, and you think, three of these need eight people, and Boston needs seven more people. There's different ways that this takes place on each of them, but the goal is to tell people about Jesus. It's to say, "You know what? God has restored me, and now He has sent me, and I need to go and tell somebody else what He has made available." May the Lord give us courage to leave the shadows of our shame and engage in the mission that's worth our life.

Let me just close by saying, for those of you who have never trusted Christ, I want to plead with you and for you right now. I urge you to believe in Jesus Christ. Read the gospels with a heart open to say, "God, is this true? If it's true, I want to believe. Help me believe." I encourage you to call out to Christ in faith. Ask Him to forgive you of your sin. The Bible says that He will. See, if you feel knocking in your heart, it's not me. The Bible says that He's the one who moves close to us. If you want to talk with somebody today about what that looks like, following Jesus and trusting Him, when we're done here in a moment, I want to ask you to get up and go straight out to a place called Next Steps, and there are some people out there who are ready and prepared and willing and excited about talking to you about trusting Christ. Providence, may John continue to walk through us, as Jesus fills that gap and brings us close to Him. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we're so grateful. We're so grateful that this is true. We're grateful, God, that You run to us in the places of our life where we're desperately in need of reconciliation. We're thankful God that You bring hope when we need hope, You bring peace when we're anxious. We're grateful for Your amazing compassion that You show to Peter, and what that means for us today. God, I pray for those in the room that feel like they're hiding in the shadows. I pray that You would give them the invitation to come out to the light, to trust You, to worship You. God, as we give to You now, not only out of our resources, but out of our heart in worship, we pray, God, that what we give would come from a full heart, and that You would be pleased. We love You, we need You, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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