

## The Gospel of John – April 24, 2022

### INTRO

“Do you believe it?”

That’s the question we’ve been asking throughout this whole series on the gospel of John. John presents Jesus in stark terms and asks us to pick a side. Do you believe it? Will you give your life to follow him?

Well, last week, for **Easter**, we did something a bit out of the ordinary. In a series about belief, we talked about doubt. About skepticism.

We looked at the story of so-called “Doubting” Thomas in the gospel of John and how Jesus gently calls him to belief *through* his doubt.

And my hope and prayer is that some of us found encouragement in knowing that **belief is not the absence of doubt; it’s what we choose to do in the presence of doubt.**

When we do baptisms later in this service, this may very well be the moment when some of you are ready to declare, like Thomas, “My Lord and My God. I do believe.”

Today, as we bring this sermon series to a close, there is one other **potential obstacle to belief** we need to talk about.

What do you do when your problem is not doubt, but **shame**?

What do you do if you feel unworthy to follow Jesus because of what you’ve done or how messed up you are?

What do you do if your faith in Jesus has crumbled and you’ve deconstructed everything you once held dear? If you *want* to believe but you don’t know how anymore?

**Is there a way back to faith?**

## A MIRACULOUS CATCH

Well, to talk about that, we are going to look at one final story from the gospel of John. The last time the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples in this gospel. It picks up right after what we read last weekend...

### **John 21, Page \_\_\_\_**

[PRAY]

## A MIRACULOUS CATCH

### **John 21:1-14**

*Later, Jesus appeared again to the disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. This is how it happened. Several of the disciples were there—Simon Peter, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples.*

*Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing."*

*"We'll come, too," they all said. So they went out in the boat, but they caught nothing all night.*

*At dawn Jesus was standing on the beach, but the disciples couldn't see who he was. He called out, "Fellows, have you caught any fish?"*

*"No," they replied.*

*Then he said, "Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get some!" So they did, and they couldn't haul in the net because there were so many fish in it.*

*Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore. The others stayed with the boat and pulled the loaded net to the shore, for they were only about a hundred yards from shore. When they got there, they found breakfast waiting for them—fish cooking over a charcoal fire, and some bread.*

*"Bring some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said. So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net to the shore. There were 153 large fish, and yet the net hadn't torn.*

*"Now come and have some breakfast!" Jesus said. None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Then Jesus served them the bread and the fish. This was the third time Jesus had appeared to his disciples since he had been raised from the dead.*

First, can I just say, I love Peter. Dude is all heart. He's boisterous, he's passionate. He's constantly sticking his foot in his mouth.

But more than anything, **he clearly loved Jesus immensely.**

When he hears Jesus is on the shore, he jumps out of the boat and swims to him rather than helping his friends deal with all those fish. "Come on, man!"

Now here's a question. Before they got to shore, how did they know it was Jesus? Verse 4 tells us they didn't know who he was. But then one of the disciples says, "It's the Lord." How did they know?

Well, the answer is because **this isn't the first time** a miraculous catch of fish like this has happened.

Here at the end of Jesus' earthy ministry, we're getting a repeat of something that happened at the very beginning.

In the gospel of **Luke**, Peter is a simple fisherman. He and his friends haven't become disciples yet, but this local rabbi uses his boat to preach from.

Just like here, they had spent the whole night without catching anything. But then Jesus tells them to head back out onto the lake. He tells them where to cast their nets, and then boom. They can barely bring in all the fish they catch.

Here's what Luke tells us about that early moment:

**Luke 5:8-11**

*When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.*

*Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!"*

*And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.*

This first miraculous catch of fish was the moment Peter chose to follow Jesus.

So you can understand. When the exact same thing happens *after* Jesus has resurrected – a night without catching anything, a net full of fish at the word of a stranger – **they have no doubt** who is calling to them from the shore.

And passionate Peter dives right in the water.

But here’s what I don’t want you to miss. This moment in John is not just a simple repeat of an earlier miracle. **Jesus is doing something very intentional. He is setting the scene for a very important conversation.**

In Luke 5, as we just saw, the miracle brings Peter to a place of shame about his sinfulness. *“Oh, Lord, please leave me – I’m such a sinful man.”*

Well, here in John 21, we know that Peter is facing a different kind of shame. He’s about to have **his first one on one conversation with Jesus** since he denied knowing him three times during the crucifixion.

Last week we saw Jesus meeting Thomas in his doubt. Now we’re going to see **Jesus meeting Peter in his shame.**

Oh, and get this. In verse 9 we see Jesus has prepared a “charcoal fire.” In Greek, it’s the word ***anthrakia – a mass or heap of live coals***

That word is used only two times in the entire New Testament. Here, and in John 18. Where Peter warms himself by a “charcoal fire” in the courtyard where he denies knowing Christ at all.

Again, Jesus is setting the scene. Because he is about to deal with Peter’s denial... With Peter’s shame – head on.

DO YOU LOVE ME?

**John 21:15-19**

*After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”*

*“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”*

*“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.*

*Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”*

*“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”*

*“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.  
A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”  
Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said,  
“Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”  
Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.  
“I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you  
liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when  
you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and  
take you where you don’t want to go.” Jesus said this to let him know by  
what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.”*

On the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter denied knowing him three times by a charcoal fire. Here, by another charcoal fire, Jesus asks him three questions and gives him three commands. This is no coincidence.

**Jesus is dealing honestly with Peter’s denial.** He is bringing Peter to a place of open acknowledgment of what he had done. “We both know what happened.”

But Jesus is **not shaming** Peter for his actions. He’s not condemning him. It may seem like he’s being a bit harsh because he keeps asking him, “do you love me?”

It even says in verse 17 Peter is hurt by this. More literally he was “grieved” by this.

But let’s think for a second about what Jesus is saying to him here.

Sure, he could have just said, “It’s fine, it’s ok, we all make mistakes, I forgive you.”

But that’s not what he says. He says, “If you love me, feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.”

This is about more than just forgiveness, isn’t it? Back in John 10, Jesus says of himself,

**John 10:11**

*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.*

Well, he did sacrifice his life for the sheep. He died and rose again to give true life to his flock.

And now, by the charcoal fire, Jesus is giving *Peter* the responsibility of caring for that same flock. Of carrying the mission forward. Of joining Jesus in the role of shepherd.

*Peter*. The one who denied Jesus three times. *That* is who Jesus is entrusting his flock to.

Jesus is not just forgiving Peter here. He is not just reinstating him to relationship. **He's reinstating him to purpose.**

When faced with Peter's shame, Jesus calls him to a mission beyond himself.

Guess **where else he does this?** In Luke 5 with that first miraculous catch of fish!

Remember how Peter responds to that miracle? "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man." **He responds out of shame.**

But this is how Jesus responds: "From now on you'll be fishing for people."

Think about that! At the beginning of his earthly ministry Jesus called shame-filled Peter to join him in his world-changing work. And now at the end, Jesus calls shame-filled Peter to join him in his world changing work.

The subtext of this moment is powerful. "Peter, you denied me three times. After all we went through together, you failed to remain faithful. But **Peter, I still believe in you.** And *you* are the one I want to carry my mission forward. Feed my sheep."

I love that this is how John finishes his gospel. After all of the in-your-face questions and challenges – *do you believe it?* – we see Jesus' closest followers failing.

Thomas fails to believe, but Jesus meets him in his doubt and he goes on to change the lives of millions. Peter fails to remain faithful, but Jesus calls him into his destiny and he goes on to lead the global Church for decades.

Again and again,

**Jesus calls his followers out of shame and into purpose.**

“Feed my sheep.”

JESUS BELIEVES IN YOU

I believe we can find great encouragement in this.

I know some of you **struggle with shame** for past mistakes & sin, just like Peter. You think of who you are or what you’ve done and you want to say, just like him, “Oh Lord, please leave me... I’m a sinner.”

If that’s you, I want you to hear something so important this morning.

**Jesus believes in you.**

I don’t mean, “Jesus is obligated to forgive you because he died for humanity and you technically count as a part of that.”

I mean, **Jesus knows you**. He knows who you are. He knows what you’ve done. And he is excited to call you into a purpose beyond yourself.

No. **You definitely haven’t earned it.** None of us have!

His question for you is not, “Are you worthy of such a high call?” He’s not asking, “Have you earned my trust?”

No. His question is, “Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?”

Is your answer ‘yes?’ Then “feed my sheep.”

**Ephesians 2:8-10**

*God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things*

*we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

**There is a reason you are here.** There are “good things” for you to do in Jesus’ name that are yours and yours alone. And he is waiting for you to live into them.

Bring your shame to him. Bring your sin. Let him forgive you with his unbelievable mercy. But more than that, **let him sweep you into your destiny.** The very reason you were born.

Jesus believes in you.

#### THE CHARCOAL FIRE

With all of that said, I know there are some of you facing **a different kind of shame** when it comes to your faith.

I know some of you have found yourself drifting recently. You’re in a time of deconstruction. The faith that you once had has crumbled.

Maybe this journey of deconstruction started out as a helpful corrective against toxicity in modern evangelicalism or a move away from harmful theologies from your youth...

but when you look at the spiritual landscape of your life these days, it’s becoming clear you **threw out the baby with the bathwater.**

Maybe in your reaction against *Christians*, you’ve unintentionally drifted from Christ. And now you feel lost and adrift from your first love.

That’s what happened with Peter. He was all in. He was the #1 disciple. Jesus’ biggest fan. He said, “I’m ready to die for you, Jesus.”

But then, **when crisis came** and his own life was threatened, Peter reacted with self-preservation and denied the Lord of his life. It was a wild miscalculation. He vastly overcorrected.



I can only imagine the turmoil in Peter's heart for those first days and weeks after this betrayal. Even after Jesus had risen, Peter's spiritual house had collapsed. The structure of his faith was in ruins.

Until... **Until Jesus met Peter by a charcoal fire** – the very setting of his denial – and gently reminded him: “Our journey together isn't over yet. It's only just begun... Feed my sheep.”

If you are adrift right now, if your spiritual house is in ruins, if you have walked away from a faith you once held dear, my encouragement to you this morning is this:

**Sit by the charcoal fire and listen for the voice of Jesus.**

Bring your shame. Bring your confusion. Bring your questions. And then listen. What is he saying to you? What does he want you to hear?

“From now on you'll be fishing for people... Feed my sheep... You were created anew in me to do the good things I've planned for you...”

It is **time for reconstruction**. It is time to rebuild your spiritual house. It may not look much like the one you built before, but Jesus is ready to build it with you.

He is still calling you to join him in his mission to heal this world.

Do you trust him enough to start again?

## BAPTISMS

There is a reason John ends his gospel with the stories of Thomas and Peter. The obstinate doubter. The shame-filled failure.

Because **they represent every one of us**. At some point in our faith journey, we are all Thomas. We are all Peter.

Which makes it even more important to see how Jesus responds to them: with love, with mercy, with grace. By calling them **out of shame and into purpose**.

[invite to baptism & recommitment candles] [PRAY]