

John's Gospel @ CF...

John 21:15-19

Sermon notes – BK

May 3, 2026

We have two weeks left in John.

Both of these sections are up close and personal exchanges between Peter and Jesus.

Why Peter?

- **There is a specific role Peter plays**
- **Not that he was to be named as The Chief founder of the church (as with the Catholic church)**
- **BUT – there is a specific and foundational role Peter plays, so John gives specific attention to this.**

We also see the humanness of Peter in a way that is important to see and learn from.

We will get into this more, this week and next.

LAST WEEK –

Peter says he's going fishing... some of the other Disciples follow...

- **They catch nothing...**
- **Then there was Jesus**
 - **He asks them if they have any fish**
 - **They say no**
 - **Jesus tells them to cast on the right side**

- They catch a ton
- John recognizes it is Jesus
- Peter puts on his cloak and jumps in to get to Jesus
- Jesus is ready for them... fish and bread on coals... fully ready to feed his disciples.

We touched on Jesus' full understanding of the situation.

- **Jesus is calling in the fish even as he asks if they have any.**
- **Jesus doesn't need it, but tells them to bring some of the fish they caught, giving them a place to add**

This is an amazing intimate moment John writes... at the beginning of what many call the "*Epilogue*" to his Gospel.

It is like John is tying the "in the beginning" to "in the new beginning"

Before we get into this passage here, it is important to point out before all of this, Peter and Jesus had time alone on the day Jesus rose from the dead.

We do not have recorded what they said, but I believe this would have been a significant exchange between Peter and Jesus.

I think it was at this time, that...

- Peter **reconciled** with Jesus
- Peter **repented** for his denial of Jesus
- Where **Jesus forgave and restored** Peter

We do not have any words on that, but we do know there are two places recorded where Peter and Jesus were alone earlier, on the day of Jesus' resurrection. (Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5) – so we know it happened.

I see it in how Peter responds to to hearing it was Jesus when they were pulling in the full net of fish...

- **Jumping in the water to get to Him, etc.**
- This seems to me to be **a demonstration** that his shame had been addressed

Peter's relationship with Jesus was restored...

John's recording of the dialogue between Peter and Jesus here... seems to be where NOW...

Peter's mission is restored.

Let's continue on with this "epilogue" of John... and see this first of two personal exchanges Jesus has with Peter...

John 21:15-19

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know

everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

You can picture this scene...

- Everyone knew Peter had denied Jesus 3x
 - The Gospels clearly record Peter making strong statements of his allegiance to Jesus
 - And... Jesus telling Peter he would deny him three times...
 - (Matt. 26:31-35, Luke 22:33, John 13:36-38)

Most, if not all understood their relationship had been restored...

- I am guessing there was *still a bit of disequilibrium* in there with the other disciples...

So Jesus, in front of the disciples that were there, restored Peter in a powerful way –

- Repeating, “*Simon, son of John, do you love me?*”

The first time Jesus adds, “*...more than these?*”

There is speculation if this was meant to put back into perspective statement Peter made before the betrayal-denial-crucifixion-resurrection...

Matthew 26:31-33

Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’³² But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”³³ Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”

This is a familiar passage and exchange between Peter and Jesus –

Much has been made about the words used for “love” in the Greek

- Jesus asking, “do you *agape* Me?” the first two times
 - Peter answering, “You know I *phileo* You...”
- The idea that agape was a stronger form of love, and Peter could not get himself to say it back because of his shame for denying Jesus...

While there is substance to this, and likely some truth... we should not play into this too much –

There are times that *phileo* is used instead of *agape* in important passages in John...

John 5:19-20a

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.

In John 11, we see phileo used two times in speaking of Jesus’ love for Lazarus... (vs. 3, 36)

We also see it here – two times!

John 16:26-27

²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

So, it seems there is something more going on here than just the agape/phileo words for love...

When Jesus addresses his disciples when they were in the boat, how did he address them?

What word did He use?

John 21:5

Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.”

Jesus used the word, “*Children...*”

We talked last week that Jesus used that address, not as a slam, but as a term of endearment...

And, possibly as a declaration of a new day and that they were indeed brand new to what it is like to walk with Jesus post-resurrection!

Could it be Jesus is also restoring Peter with each question... not just to restore him for every denial, but to remind Peter who he was and what the Father had called Peter to... from the beginning?

Simon, His name in Hebrew means “One who hears” or “listening”

This would be a great time for Simon to lean in on that!

Jesus does not just call him Simon, but Jesus adds “Son of John...”

It is like Jesus is taking Simon Peter back... all the way.

- **Back to when he was young in age, pure in heart**
- **Back to when he first met Jesus**
- **Back to the first time he saw the biggest catch of fish in his life!**
- **Back to when Jesus declared His new name**

John 1:41-42

⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴² He

brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Is Jesus taking Peter back to where he began?

Is he taking him on a Psalm 51 journey...?

Psalm 51:10-13

***Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.***

***¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.***

***¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.***

***¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.***

**COULD it be that the call to “*come back to your first love*”
Jesus gives to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2
began here with Peter?**

**There seems to be a progression from young to old, even
in how Jesus seems to progress from**

“Feed My lambs...” to “Feed my sheep...”

**It appears that Jesus was taking Simon Peter on a
journey through this passageway of love...**

- Three times asking, “*Do you love Me?*”

- Three times Peter responding, *“You know I love You.”*

The last time Jesus asks, Simon Peter was “grieved”

- This brought him to sadness, sorrow... that Jesus asks a third time!
- Was he not forgiven after all?
- Did Jesus not believe him?

Simon Peter makes a powerful statement of the Deity of Jesus,

John 21:17b

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

In all of these, Jesus calls Peter to action

- *Feed My lambs – Take care of their needs for their spiritual welfare*
- *Tend My sheep – Shepherd my sheep*
- *Feed My sheep – Take care of their needs for their spiritual welfare*

Love - it is a verb

And... with each reminder of who he is, Simon Peter is being restored in his call... and into the Pastor/Overseer/ Shepherd Jesus set him apart to be...

We read this clearly in Matthew’s Gospel...

Matthew 16:13-18

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Wow – there is a LOT to this exchange in John 21, is there not?

- **Jesus has not forgotten**
- **Jesus has not changed His mind**

- **Jesus was forming Peter into the rock/the foundation he was called to be**

Peter responds well, in total dependence on Jesus

We also see that Jesus just demonstrated the very thing He tells Simon to do.

- ***Feed*** my lambs (children) – Here even physically with the fish
- ***Tend*** – Jesus is present with them to be their Shepherd in this time of “in between.”
- ***Feed My sheep*** - long term, in going, through the course of their lives, Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit to lead and

guide them into all truth.

Then... Jesus lets him know that Simon Peter will stay strong and finish well...

John 21:18-19

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.”

Finish well?!

Not sure Peter was excited to hear about that...

We will see how he responds to this next week.

It is notable that:

- **John writes this Gospel well after Peter had been martyred...**

John couldn't leave this out of the story!

Jesus tells Peter,

“Follow me...”

We know, Peter does just that.

Do you need to be reminded of the love you had for Jesus, like when you first started?

Are you being held back by shame or ways you feel like you have failed to be a faithful follower of Jesus...

What would Jesus speak to you about that today?

What did Peter write years after this exchange with his Lord?

1 Peter 1:3-9

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, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Is this for you?

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Yes – this is for ALL who call on His name...