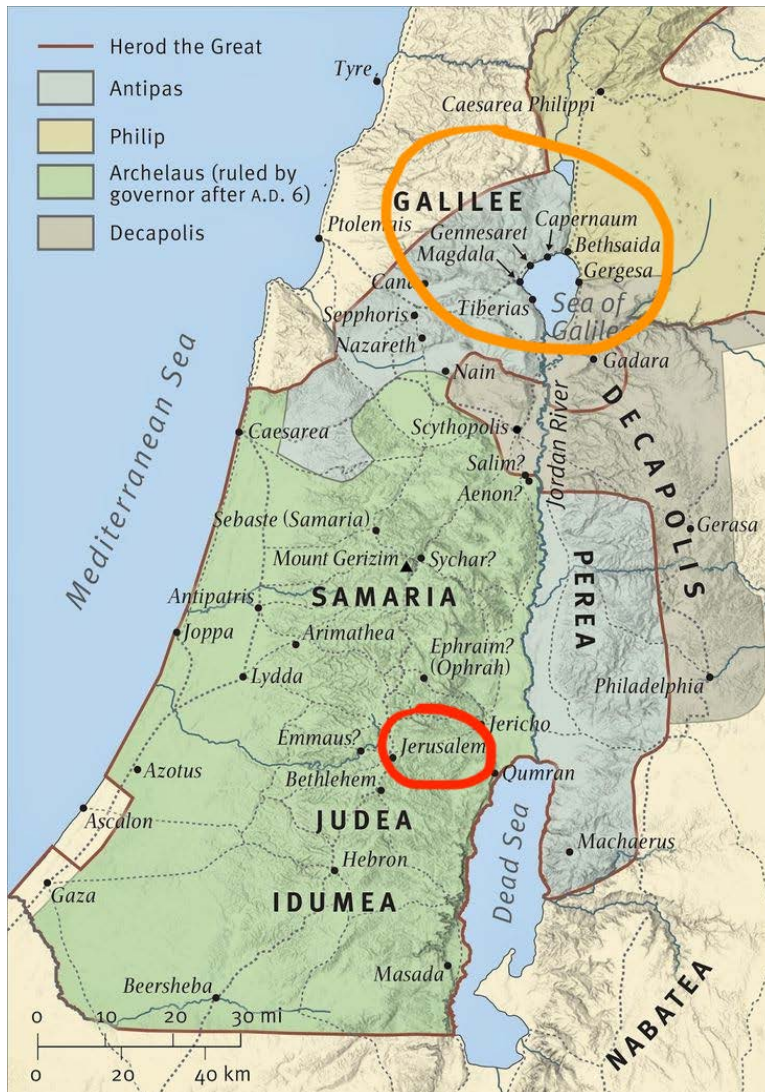


We've finally come to the end...after a 1 year, 9-month journey, today we conclude the Gospel of John. What a fantastic journey it's been. In fact, I went back and looked...we started the Gospel of John way back on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2021, and so, this morning, after over 80 messages, we arrive today at the finish line...and I find it quite appropriate that we end at the Sea of Galilee. Why? Because it's in and around the Sea of Galilee where it all began for most of these guys. Matthew was a local tax collector, and many were fishermen. Hence, the sermon graphic we've been using for this series:



We see them fishing. Today, we're going back to the Sea of Galilee, and if you were here with us last week, you'll remember we saw this was the third time Jesus had appeared to His disciples. Remember, He had instructed them, by way of the women who had come to the tomb, that He was going to eventually meet with them in Galilee. You say, "Why Galilee?" Because that's home! That's where Jesus is from. That's where Jesus performed 80% of His miracles. Jesus wanted to reveal Himself to His followers up north, if you will...where the majority of His followers were from. See the map...



He would leave Jerusalem, in red, where He was crucified and buried, and head back north...over 100 miles to Galilee, the region in orange. It's in Galilee that Jesus appeared to more than 500 disciples at one time, (as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15). He's gone home...and now He's meeting with some of the Apostles over breakfast...but, His attention turns to Peter.

### **John 21:15-25**

<sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> 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." <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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." <sup>19</sup> (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." <sup>20</sup> 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?" <sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" <sup>23</sup> So the saying spread abroad

among the brothers<sup>[b]</sup> 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?" <sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. <sup>25</sup> Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

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Yes, we've returned to Galilee... It's such a beautiful place. It's where Jesus walked those shores and began choosing His Apostles. My favorite place on earth is the Sea of Galilee. Let me show you some pictures:



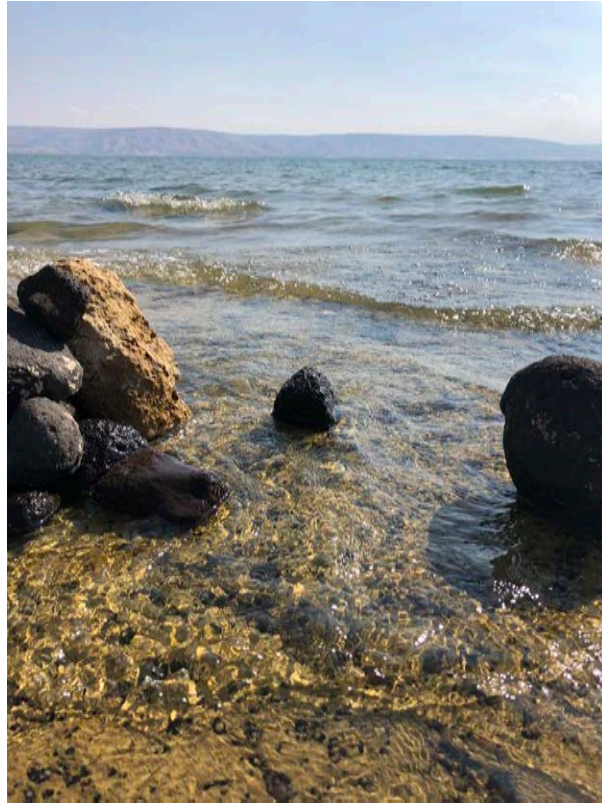
this is view from the northern end looking southeast toward the Golan Heights.



this is along the shoreline in Capernaum (home base for Jesus)



the water is so beautiful...Pam took off her shoes...



As I took this picture...I imagined Jesus being there



we eventually got on a boat and road out at sunset, looking back at Mt. Arbel



this looking east again...it's sparse...not much has changed for 2000 years.

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I show you all of this because Jesus began calling fishermen by telling them: "I will make you fishers of men." Ultimately, they would drop their nets and leave it all behind and follow Jesus. Now, almost three years has gone by and Jesus has died and risen from the dead proving that He is the Son of God, and a "new normal" is going to be required for this group. There has been a lot that's happened in the last several wks for these men and HIM. There has been the betrayal and the death of Judas, denial by Peter, the abandonment of all the Apostles, except John...there has been the death and resurrection...and in less than a month, from this moment, He'll be gone. He's going back to the Father and He's been telling them this for months. So, how will they move forward? After all, He's been teaching them, training them, feeding them, (if you will) for years...how will this motely group move forward?

Well, first, He's going to restore the order and leadership of the group, and this starts with Peter.

**John 21:15**

**<sup>15</sup>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."**

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Now church, there is so much to unpack in this verse...I could preach an entire message on this one verse. In fact, there's been much said about this verse and this passage regarding the Greek word(s) for love. We have the English word: "love," but in the Greek we have four words, and because of that there are many different views on how to interpret this passage. I'm going to do my best to try to teach what's here...as it appears and just let the passage for itself...

The main point: Jesus is seeking to restore Peter. Some argue that He pulled Peter off to the side in a private meeting. We're not told that...so I want to be careful not to infer that. Instead, I believe this was all still happening around the campfire/breakfast had just been completed. I believe Jesus is

going to restore Peter from His three denials, which were public, in a public fashion...here publicly...because the other Apostles needed to know Jesus still had confidence in Peter.

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Now as we look at verse 15, Jesus calls Peter, "Simon Peter." What is up with that? Well, that's both his names... His name before Jesus met him, "Simon" and the name that Jesus gave Peter ("Cephas" in Aramaic, "Petros" meaning "Stone" in Greek, aka: Peter), the name Jesus gave Peter when Peter proclaimed Jesus was the Son of God at Caesarea Philippi. This must have gotten Peter's attention, which I believe was a reminder of who Peter was before Jesus met him...and who Peter had become after he had met Jesus.

Look at your life...how far have you come since knowing Jesus? I know how far I've come! No! I've not arrived...not even close...but the Lord continues to hone me and shape me and refine me...just as He does you. After all, we're being sanctified, made holy, and that's a process...often times a slow one at that.

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And oh, hasn't it been a process for Peter? He always seemed to have such a high view of himself. That's what got Peter into all of his trouble...he boldly proclaimed... "Well, all these guys may leave you...not me...I'll go to my death for you." Jesus said to him, "Peter, before the rooster crows, you'll deny three times." And He did... See the depiction...



Think about it... Peter had walked on water with Jesus...something no other man had ever done, before or since... Peter proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. Peter was in the inner circle...of he, James and John: and yet, when pressured in the crowd...He denied He even knew Jesus. So you know they all had to be thinking: "How can this man lead our group after Jesus leaves, after all He's done?" Watch it again:

**John 21:15b**

**"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"**

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More than these? What does that mean? Well, isn't that exactly what Peter had said in the upper room...are we back to that again...is Jesus actually pushing Peter to make that same kind of proclamation again? Listen, Jesus is going to take us to the place in our lives that needs to be killed in order for us to move on...the same hurdle will keep coming up and we've got to deal with it... How did Peter answer?

**John 21:15c**

He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”

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Does Peter bring up those guys? Nope! He’s not going down that path in front of all these guys again. That’s good. Jesus simply said, (which shows trust in Peter), “Feed my lambs.” In other words, I trust you to do what I’ve been doing as the Good Shepherd...I’m trusting you...I’m turning this project over to you and these men...you’ve got to start doing the work of feeding the sheep, like I had been doing. Verse 16...Jesus isn’t done...

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### **John 21:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> 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.” <sup>17</sup> 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.”

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Three times... “Do you love me, do you love, do you love me?” That’s what it looks like in English but, in the Greek there’s a switching back and forth between the Greek word *agapáo*, which is the highest form of love in the Greek...it’s unconditional love...the love of God for us. John 3:16 love...versus the word Peter used: “*phileó*,” meaning, “brotherly love.” Jesus kept using the form of the word *agape*...Peter, *phileó*. Does that mean anything?

Some say that it doesn’t, but I actually think perhaps it does (not dogmatic)...but again, some point out that John uses the words interchangeably in other parts of his gospel. And I’m good with that. But the Greek words are the Greek words. So, I’m not going to attempt to make too much of this...but, it seems that Peter was afraid to say to “*agape*” that’s highest form...and dropped to *phileó*...a lower form of love...perhaps because he was afraid of boasting... I don’t know...but, in my mind...Peter didn’t want to make the same mistake again...he’s learning (at least, in my mind).

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Put yourself there on that seashore. You’ve just finished breakfast, made with charcoal fire. That’s the same kind of fire that was used in the courtyard of Caiaphas. Same smells...and the same sounds... remember: it’s early morning...what happens in early mornings in Israel in the first century? You’re greeted with the sound of a rooster crowing. I believe Peter sees...hears...smells...all these things, and that courtyard of denial comes flooding back into his mind... What will he do?

Brother/sister: What will you do? What are you doing? What are you doing when your past comes before your mind? What do you do when the sights, the sounds...the smells flood your brain with some trauma, heartache, tragedy from your past? Listen...let the One who made breakfast at the fire change your perspective. Jesus is at the fire... Jesus is in the morning light...focus on Him...not your past...that’s done...it’s finished...and that’s what Jesus was seeking to do Same smells, sounds, circumstances...but Jesus was placing them all in Peter’s past. **That’s what *agape* love does.** It’s grace...it’s mercy...it’s forgiveness...it’s love...

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For Jesus...the motive is always LOVE. Because He is love. God is love and we understand this. Think about it: Why do people make sacrifices? Out of love. It’s what a husband does for a wife and a wife for husband, parents for children, soldiers for their country. Love. **We understand this.** People who love greatly are willing to sacrifice greatly. Jesus said: “If you love me, you’ll keep my commandments.” Paul said it this way to the Corinthian believers:

### **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**



<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

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Who are you living for? Jesus? Or yourself? You say, "Of course, Jesus." If He were standing here and you had to look Him in the eye and answer that. What would He say?

We are to live for Jesus...and we do that because WE LOVE HIM! And we've seen that pattern all the way back to the Law in the Old Testament. The Shema in Deut. 6. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength," right? And then, remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He said the **same thing**...and then added...and a second one is like it... "Love your neighbor as yourself." What's the common denominator? LOVE! Again, Jesus said it over and over:

**John 14:15**

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

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The motive is LOVE! Jesus said:

**John 14:21**

<sup>21</sup> "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

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Is Jesus showing/manifesting Himself to you? If not, it might be because you aren't keeping His commandments...abiding in Him. You say, "Oh boy, here comes the legalism." No legalism here...this isn't about the Law...this about love. If you LOVE Jesus, you'll keep His commandments. If I love Pam, I'll want to do right by her, not harm her. The same is true for Jesus!

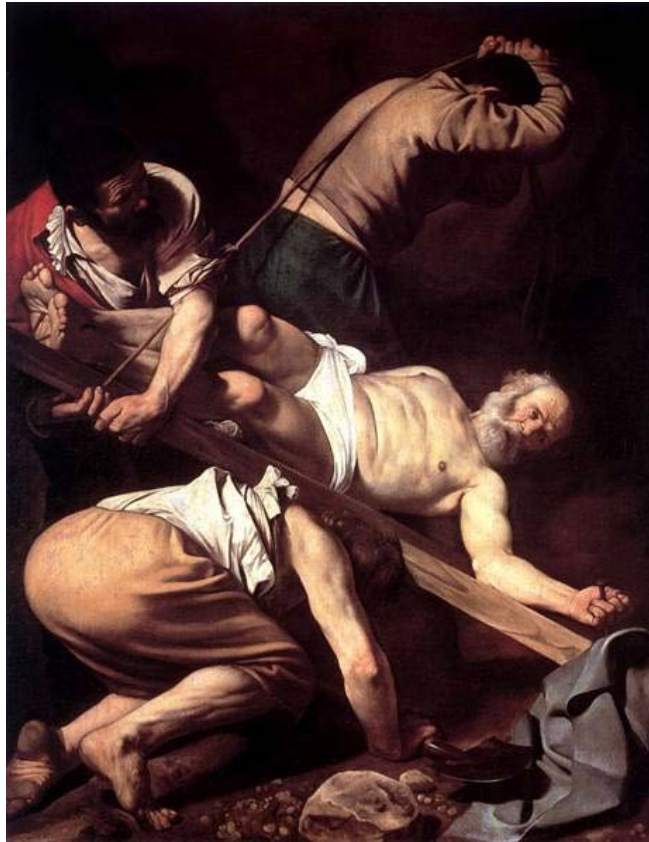
What Jesus does next is almost shocking! Watch!

**John 21:18-19**

<sup>18</sup> 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." <sup>19</sup> (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."

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Oh my, Peter finds out he's going to be a martyr...a **crucified** martyr at that! You've seen this before:



The depiction of how Peter would die. Early church fathers tell us that's how he died. Hands stretched out like his Savior...but upside down, because he felt unworthy to be crucified the same way as Jesus. You might say, "That's terrible...to KNOW he's going to die as a martyr." Yeah...that's tough...but, how about this...how would it feel to know that you're not going to blow it again. You will go to your death this time...you will follow Jesus...to the end this time! Do you see? Peter needed to know...and so do those other men that Peter wasn't going to blow it again. He can be counted on! Let me ask you, do you think this gave Peter (for the rest of his life) a resolute confidence that he wouldn't fail his Savior again? I believe this gave Peter the power and the boldness to preach the message at Pentecost when 3,000 were saved. To stand before the Sanhedrin with John at the risk of their lives...when they were being told not to preach about Jesus! Power had come to Peter!

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Well, it appears Jesus stood up and started walking...He's done talking...but Peter saw something.

**John 21:20-22**

<sup>20</sup> 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?" <sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

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Poor ole Peter...what in the world? Why is asking about John? Bless his heart. Old habits are hard to break, aren't they? It's like Peter was thinking, "Okay Lord, I'm going to be crucified, so what's going to happen to him?" I love how Jesus answered Him...with some terse sarcasm... "Peter, if I want John to remain alive until I come back...what's that to you...YOU FOLLOW ME...it's none of your business what I do with John. You do what I tell you to do. Follow Me!"

Church, it's so easy to try to compare ourselves to others, isn't it? That's that social media game. I call it the "Comparison game!" Who's got it better than me? Or can I make it look like I've got it better

than you? **Jesus says the same to us today:** “Follow Me! Get out of the comparison game. Find identity in me...not what I do or don’t do for someone else.”

Brothers and sisters...we shouldn’t be concerned about what God has for somebody else...and we shouldn’t lament or be jealous when another brother or sister has it better than we do AND we shouldn’t find satisfaction when they have it worse than we do.” That’s not love and that’s not how Jesus taught us to live. We are to think of others more highly than ourselves.

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Well, you can imagine, here comes the gossip train...

**John 21:23**

<sup>23</sup> So the saying spread abroad among the brothers<sup>[b]</sup> 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?”

Isn’t that something? How ridiculous to believe something like that. But that’s what happens with gossip...things get totally blown out of proportion. Mountains out of mole hills. People love to talk don’t they...and so often what people are talking about hasn’t got anything to do with the truth...it’s just stuff being taken out of proportion. No, we shouldn’t take part in gossip...we should stay in our lane. That’s what Jesus was saying to Peter. Stay in your lane.

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Well, we’ve come to the end of this glorious Gospel...

**John 21:24-25**

<sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. <sup>25</sup> Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

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How can anyone encapsulate all that Jesus did on this earth? You can’t. That’s what John was saying. It’s like trying to explain the unexplainable. What Jesus did on this earth 2000 years ago during His 3-year ministry was beyond books...beyond words...beyond explanation...He was God in the flesh...come to earth...on a rescue mission for us...to do exactly what He did for Peter. To take a nobody...who blew it, multiple times...and make him into a somebody...a man...who went from being a lowly fisherman...to a world changer...all because He met Jesus. That can be you today.