The Eyes of Failure — Delivery Transcript

John 21 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 7, 2024 · *Through Their Eyes*

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If you have a Bible, we're going to be in John chapter 21, so you can turn to John chapter 21. It's the last chapter in the Gospel of John. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair in the seat in front of you, and if you don't own a Bible, you can certainly take that home with you as our gift to you. We have been in a series pre-Easter, Easter, and post-Easter, a three-week series on looking at the events of the crucifixion and resurrection and appearances of Jesus through the eyes of the original eyewitnesses.

One of the things that makes Christianity unique is it's not just a kind of a religion that says believe it's so because I said so, but it verifies the truthfulness of its claims through a historical event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that you can verify, at least through historical inquiry, did it or did it not happen. And if it happened, if God did truly raise Jesus from the dead, then the big idea of the series is that Jesus can change everything and everything and anything that Jesus touches, Jesus changes.

He changes the way that we love, the way that we feel, the way that we steward our cash, and the way that we navigate certain negative emotions in our life. And some of the things that we've been looking at over the last couple of weeks are negative emotions like failure. I'm sorry, I'm going to look at failure this morning. We've seen things like grieving, struggling with doubt, and this morning we look at the issue of failure. Now, I don'ton't know if anybody has ever failed in this room. Hopefully I'm in a room full of centers.

I've certainly failed big time in my life and there is no worse feeling than the feeling of failure. And I'm not saying like you didn't meet your standard failure. Like, oh, you're supposed to get an A and you got a B plus. That's not what I mean. I mean public, big time, everybody sees it and hangs their head and goes, oh, they kind of feel bad for you. You feel miserable. You feel like the only thing you can do after that kind of failure is to just kind of like shrivel up, turn around, run the other direction, and never show your face again kind of failure.

Does anybody know what I'm talking about by that kind of failure? Thank you. I'm glad I'm among friends. So who's feeling in the world? And most people when they experience failure in that way, they do what Simba did in the Lion King, you know, back when Disney made good movies like the Lion King. They—what Simba does in the Lion King when he realizes that he at least to some degree He had some hand in his father's death. There were other factors at play he didn't know at the time. But he felt responsible for his father's death.

So what did he do? He says, this isn't for me. This is not my life anymore. I'm going to go hang out with a rat and a pig in the jungle and Hakuna Matata, and he has a life, but it's not a life characterized by his calling. It's not a life characterized by what he was initially and really built to be and to do. And that's how most of us respond to failure, if we're honest. And even those of you who say, as a Christian, I failed. There's failure that everybody experiences.

And I think Jesus can meet us in our failure irrespective of our beliefs about Jesus. But those of you who follow Jesus, and then after your conversion, and you're walking with the Lord for a season, and then you fail after that, then it's kind of like a double whammy. And you feel like, well, I can't kind of be that anymore. I've got to kind of do something else. I'm just going to be over here and let the Christians do what the Christians are going to do, let the Jesus people be what the Jesus people are going to be, but I'm not included in that anymore.

That's how a lot of people respond to failure. And that's how our main character this morning in the passage today would have felt. Now we could have looked at any character in the Bible because almost all of the great characters in the Scripture have failure. And we've seen in the life of Abraham as we've gone through Genesis, he's failed not once, not twice, but three times or more. And you see it in the King David, who was a man after God's own heart. He had a failure where he committed adultery and then killed the husband of the wife that he committed adultery with, yet somehow God redeems his failure.

We could have looked at Samson. We could have looked at the Apostle Paul, who tried to kill Christians and wipe Christianity off the face of the planet, and yet God redeemed him from his failure. We could have looked at a lot of people for failure, but today we're looking at Peter mostly because he's in John chapter 21 and I like to preach through chapters sequentially and he just happened to be in John chapter 21 so we're going to look at Peter's failure and I want you to have a thumb in John 21 but also put another finger in Matthew 26 because we're going to kind of go back and forth between Matthew's articulation of this event and John's articulation of this event because Matthew adds in some details that I think are important.

So John chapter 21 is the main text and then Matthew chapter 26 will be a supplementary text. And just to kind of give you a bird's-eye view of where we are at this moment in John chapter 21, Jesus has already been crucified. He has been buried in the tomb, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea kind of got a tomb prepared for him. On the third day, Jesus is

raised from the dead and he has, in John 21, or John 20, appeared to his disciples two different times. When you get to John 21, it feels kind of funny to me because it says, after this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples by the sea of Tiberias.

Now, Tiberias is not in Jerusalem. The sea of Tiberias is another word for the sea of Galilee. Think of Galilee kind of like you would think of Ruby versus Abilene. Okay? Abilene is Jerusalem, the big city. Galilee was the country. They've gone back to the country and it's like a whole new scene, a whole new chapter, a whole new everything. And it feels forced. Now I'm no literary expert, but when I read John 20, 31, which is what I thought would be a natural conclusion to the book, it says, these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in His name.

Yes or no, does that not sound like a great conclusion to a gospel. Yes, this is it. Of course, if I was writing a gospel, that's how I would have vended my gospel. But that's not how John ends his gospel. He does a beautiful ending, and then he says, oh, and then after this, Jesus revealed himself, why after this? I think it's because of Peter. I really do. Jesus has addressed the doubt of Thomas in chapter 20. He addressed the grief of Mary in chapter 19, but there's one person left in our story, Peter, who the last time that John mentioned him did not mention him in a great and favorable light.

As we just saw, as Jace read, he was thinking that he was doing what Jesus wanted him to do, but he was in fact resisting God's will in his life and cutting off the ear of that soldier. Right before that, Jesus had said, hey, come and pray with me. Please stay awake and pray with me. And three times, Peter along with the other disciples can't even stay awake to pray. So three times Jesus comes to him and says, wake up, wake up, wake up. And then before that, as they're leaving their last supper in the Passover meal and they're making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, John, or I'm sorry, Jesus tells Peter, tonight all of you are going to fall away on account of me.

This is in Matthew 26 if you want to turn there. Matthew 26 starting in verse 31. He said, tonight all of you are going to fall away on account of me because the scripture says I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. And here comes Peter, our main character. Peter told him, even if everyone else falls away because of you, I will never fall away. To which Jesus responds, no, before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me three times.

To which Peter says, Even if I have to die with you, Peter told him, I will never deny you and all the disciples said the same. So what you have here with Peter is an expressed, almost arrogant commitment that I will never do what you say I'm going to do. And if you were to study failure in your life, I know certainly failure in my life, almost every big embarrassing failure in my life was preceded by this kind of spirit. In your notes, I'm going to call it a delusion, a self-delusion of it'll never happen to me.

And I've never met somebody who failed royally, who didn't first think that would never happen to me. Almost everybody who's failed in a big, big way originally said to themselves, I'm not that kind of person. I don't have those kind of problems. I don't struggle with that kind of temptation. That'll never happen to me. That's why Scripture says, take heed lest you fall. If you think you're secure, take heed lest you fall because there is a sneaky toxic mindset, a strong delusion that overpowers a person who has become kind of self-righteous, holier than thou, feeling invincible, it is what failure always begins with, just like it does in the life of Peter.

He's arguing with Jesus about how strong he is as a human being, never a great idea. So Jesus says, you're going to deny me three times and sure enough, that's exactly what happens. So they arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. It says in Matthew 26, a little bit later, that Peter was following him at a distance. I think this is an interesting phrase. I don't know if this is because Peter was like G.I. Joe strategic making sure he wasn't going to get caught. Or if this was Peter already thinking to himself, oh wow, Jesus is arrested.

My plan for how this was going to go isn't going like I thought it would. Maybe I should hang back and there should be a little distance between me and the Lord. Sure enough, they take him to the courtyard of the high priest. The high priest was kind of like the Jewish leader of the day who if you were in trouble with the Jewish leader then he could turn you into the Roman leaders and the Roman leaders could have you criminally prosecuted. So he's in the high priest courtyard. Originally he's questioned by Annas, who was the former high priest.

But then when that conversation goes south, they hand him over to the big high priest. And while he's out there, in fact, to show you the rest of the conversation, go back to John chapter 18. While they're there, Peter denies the Lord. So a servant girl comes up to Peter, who was the doorkeeper, and she says, aren't you one of this man's disciples? And he says, no, I'm not. And then the servants and the officials made, I want you to circle this phrase: a charcoal fire. This is going to come back to play a little bit later in Peter's story, but I just want you to get the picture.

Jesus is at the courtyard of the high priest. Jesus is on trial for something he didn't do. Peter has been prophesied by Jesus, you're going to deny me. And as soon as he's asked the question, is this, aren't you one of this guy's disciples? He says no, and then he comes up to this charcoal fire that they had built. And Peter begins to stand there warming himself along with everybody else. The second denial comes a little bit later. After Jesus had been on trial, the conversation goes sour. They say that we're not going to deal with this man.

Let's take him to the high priest. And so as they're taking him to the high priest, Jesus is making his exit and Peter was standing there warming himself. And they said to him, again, you are one of this guy's disciples too, aren't you? And then he denied it again and said, no, I'm not. And then one of the high priest servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had

cut off, he said to him, no, didn't I see you with him in the garden? And Peter denied it again and immediately the rooster crowed.

Now if you go back to Matthew, one of the things that's interesting about Matthew's version of the events is that on this third round when Peter denies Jesus, he actually swears to himself and he swears to God, I do not know the man. Now he starts to curse. I mean like curse like a sailor because Peter was a fisherman. So he's dropping the F bomb. He's doing whatever it takes. He didn't drop the F bomb. Don't let me put words in Peter's mouth. He's cursing in ways that would not have been appropriate.

And then he swears to God that he does not know or have anything to do with Jesus. And as soon as he does that, it says that immediately the rooster crowed. Other Gospels say that Jesus looked at Peter after that rooster crowed and Peter was grieved in his heart. He remembered the words that Jesus had spoken before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me three times. And so he does what Simba does. He does what everybody does after a big gross public humiliating failure. He turns around, turns inward, runs away, and weeps.

And so when you get to John chapter 21, there is a lot of shame in Peter's heart. Why? Because he had this strong delusion that it cannot happen to me. And that delusion increasingly created distance between him and the Lord. He thought he was close, right? As Jayce mentioned, all of us probably would have tried to pull our sword and defended the Lord Jesus Christ. But the problem was he was trying to do great things for Jesus, but had begun to lose intimacy with Jesus with the result that what Jesus' agenda was about and what Peter's agenda was about were two totally different things.

And that distance in his relationship with Jesus grew bigger and deeper and wider as time went on to the fact, to the point that eventually he's warming himself at the fire along with a bunch of people who hated Jesus and when push comes to shove and they say are you or are you not with this man he says no I swear to God I'm not and let me act in a way that proves even if I used to be with him I'm not with him anymore. And that's how failure works.

It starts with a delusion: I'm okay, I'm strong, I don't need people, I don't need anything. After you begin to grow confident in the flesh if I can use that word you stop spending time with the Lord, you stop drawing near to the Lord, you no longer pray, you no longer go to church, you know, even when you do go to church you just kind of don't feel anything, you don't sense anything, it's just kind of dry and meaningless and void because that intimacy that you once had with the Lord has disappeared and it culminates with a, you know what, maybe I'm not, maybe He isn't.

I'll just do me over here. I'm not going to be a super sinful person. I'm not going to be super bad person. I'm just not going to be that man anymore. And then that failure when Peter awakens to it destroys it. Now know that I'm not alone in saying that it's very easy to get to

that kind of place in your life, in relationship with the Lord. Nobody does it intentionally. Nobody becomes there overnight. It starts with an overconfidence in your own strength and then gradually over time, as you lose intimacy with the Lord, you find yourself in a compromising position where you totally blow it.

So in that kind of a shame or that kind of a context, Peter is invited with the other disciples to go to Galilee where Jesus said, I'm going to meet you after I've been raised. And so in John 21, Jesus has already been raised. He's appeared to other disciples. We don't know that Peter is one of those disciples, but he's appeared to others. And they are asking Peter to come along with them to Galilee. So it says after this, Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberias, that's the sea of Galilee.

He's back in his hometown, he's back in his stomping grounds. He revealed himself in this way. Yes, Simon Peter, Thomas called the twin, Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, and then Zebedee's sons, James and John, and then two other people we don't know who they were, and they were all together. Why is Peter there when Peter's a shell of himself, when Peter was kind of feeling on the outs. I think Peter's there specifically because Jesus told Mary Magdalene in Mark chapter 16 verse 7, make sure you bring Peter. He says to Mary Magdalene, be sure you bring Peter because I think Jesus knew where Peter was going to be emotionally and know that Peter wouldn't come willingly.

So you're going to drag him because I've got plans for Peter. And so Peter doesn't necessarily want to be there. And the reason I know that is because in verse three, the next words out of Peter's mouth when they get to their destination where he said they're going to meet with Jesus. Peter says, I'm not doing that, I'm going fishing. I'm going fishing. And he doesn't mean I'm going fishing like I think I'm bored and I think I'd like to see if the fish are biting kind of a hobby fishing.

This is Peter's old trade. This is Peter's old life. This was what he used to do. This is what he was good at. This is how he made a living. This is what gave him confidence and identity and purpose in life. And so basically what he's saying is I'm no good for Jesus. Jesus is no good for me. I'm just going to go back to what I know. I'm going fishing. And it says the other disciples go with him because Peter was a natural leader. And as a leader, you lead people whether you like it or not, you have influence.

And so these other disciples go with Peter, maybe to give him moral support, to bring him back in, maybe because they were like Peter, well, if you're out, I'm out. This is what distractions always do. I'm sorry, this is what failure always does. Failure begins with a delusion of I'm invincible. It grows with a distancing in your relationship with the Lord, and what it culminates with is failure leads you to a place of feeling your life with distractions. I call them distractions or former comforts. You'll go back to the things that used to make you feel good.

You'll go back to the things that used to give you meaning and purpose. You go back to the things that kind of desensitize you and numb you to what it is that you lost in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and you kind of go there because it feels like home. It used to be home. The problem with Peter was, is that it wasn't home. And it wasn't producing what Peter wanted it to produce because it says at the end of verse four that they fished all night long and they didn't catch anything.

I'm sorry, at the end of verse three, they went out into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. So even though you may try to fill your life with distractions, those distractions ultimately don't bring you a lot of joy and contentment. They leave you feeling dejected. They leave you feeling like, man, I can't win. I can't have Jesus and I can't have a life without Jesus. Totally miserable. And I sympathize with that sentiment, the times in my life where Jesus was restoring me from failure. I can't be happy with Jesus.

I can't be happy without Jesus. And this, even though it was probably miserable for Peter, this is God's kindness. This is God's way of saying, I am not done with you yet. I am not giving up on you. You may run from me, but I'm coming after you. Just like if you had a love for a child, but the child was going to run into traffic. Even if you had to break their arm to save them, you would break their arm to save them because you don't want that child to be run over.

This is Jesus taking Peter by the arm, making his life unfruitful and unjoyful and he's got no contentment because Jesus is saying you can't find happiness there. Come back here. And it looks different for different people. For Peter it was fishing all night and not having anything to show for it. Then Jesus appears in verse four. It says that he appeared and that they didn't really recognize that it was Jesus at the time. Now some people say that this is because they were 100 yards away. Some people say it's because it was rainy and foggy and they couldn't see.

I don't know if that's true. I think this is just what Jesus liked to do. I think he liked to toy with people after his resurrection because every time he appears to people after his resurrection, they don't know who he is. My favorite example is when Jesus appears to marry the initial appearance in John chapter 20, he's standing right in front of Mary and Mary's crying because she misses Jesus and she doesn't know where they put the body and she thinks somebody stole Jesus' body and so Jesus shows up and looks at Mary and he's like, hey, girl, why are you crying?

And she looks at him right in the face and she's like, I don't know where they put the Lord. While she's talking to the Lord. And then Jesus says, Mary. And then it's like, oh, she sees who Jesus is and she's like clings on to him. So he does that with Mary, he does it with Luke 24 with the Emmaus disciples, is even better with them. He walks with them, he's like, why are you guys so sad? And they're like, dude, are you living on another planet? We were

followers of Jesus and we thought he was the Messiah and then the Romans crucified him and we're probably going to get arrested and killed and it's terrible.

And Jesus was like, oh, this sounds bad, but wasn't that to like fulfill the prophets and the law and he began to give them big Old Testament Bible study and showed how the scriptures pointed to the cross and the resurrection and all these things. And then he was about to pretend like he was going on his way and the other two disciples like, no, no, no, come and have dinner with us. And so they come have dinner with Jesus, not knowing as Jesus until Jesus, or maybe when he was breaking the bread, I can't remember the exact details, but then their eyes are open.

They're like, dude, we just had dinner with Jesus. They didn't know it at the time. And now you have Peter looking, maybe it was 100 yards away and he couldn't see, or maybe Jesus was intentionally concealing his identity so that he could give Peter a message in a way that Peter needed to hear so that Peter could know God wants to bring me home. I think that's why. So he raises the question in verse five. You guys don't, I'm sorry, was there a note there? What's in the middle? Did I skip something?

I guess not. He says, Little children / friends, Jesus called to them. You don't have any fish, do you? Now I do a little editing here because the CSB translation, it says that Jesus says friends. That sounds very artificial to me, like friends. That's not really what the Greek word means. If you look at the original language, it's the, I call it the diminutive masculine form, which just means little boys. I think Jesus kind of jive in them here. I had a friend growing up, his name was Brandon, he was Hispanic friend and his mom was one of those Hispanic women who cursed in Spanish and you're like, yeah.

She would, every time Brandi would get a little whiny or gripey or whatever, she would say, por la cito, por la cito, por la cito maniño, and she kind of like do this little, you know, jagging on the stomach. I'm probably saying it all wrong. Am I saying that properly? Those of you who speak Spanish, por la cito, por la cito, there it is, por la cito maniño. That's it. And he would get, like, red and embarrassed, and I just loved it. You know, I was like, oh, poor little baby.

That's, I think that's what Jesus is doing with his disciples. And he's not asking them, oh, do you not have any fish? Did you have any luck last night? No, he knows they didn't have any luck. He goes, you don't have any fish, do you? Big fish, your man. Don't have no fish. I think this is Jesus being one of the guys, because Jesus was a man, and as a man, hangs out with other men, one of the ways men show love to each other is they mock each other, make fun of each other, and make each other cry.

And that's what Jesus is doing. They don't know that it's Jesus. So Jesus doing that and then he says in verse six, why don't you throw your net out on the other side of the boat and then

maybe you'll find something. And again, they don't know it's Jesus at the time, but I know without a shadow of a doubt that when Peter heard those words, he immediately had a flashback to another day when he heard those same words from Jesus. It's in Luke chapter five. It's one of the first miracles that Jesus performs in the gospel of Luke And it is the miracle that Peter experiences and it results in his conversion.

He becomes a Christian because of the miracle of the miraculous catch of fish. And it's so interesting in Luke chapter five when Jesus says, hey, throw your nets out on the other side and they do so and they get so many fish that the nets begin to break. Peter's immediate reaction when he recognizes, oh my goodness, God is in my boat. He falls to his knees and he says, Lord, get away from me. I'm a sinful man. And Jesus doesn't say you're right and you better be afraid. Jesus says, you're right, you are a sinful man, but don't have to be afraid.

You don't have to fear because I am here for you. I love you. And I want to make you a fisher of men. I want to give you a new life. I want to give you a new purpose. I want to give you a future that is infinitely better than fishing. And so I just have to imagine when Peter hears those words—throw your nets out on the other side—he probably thinks to himself, Well, that's what Jesus said to me. And so in your notes this is to me this is Jesus giving a miracle with a message and in my life when Jesus has brought me home what happens is there is a Carl Jung who I don't recommend he's not a Christian but he's a very insightful psychologist he called this synchronicity so even a non-believer recognizes that one of the ways that God manifests himself is through seemingly disassociated coincidental happenings coming together in such a way that it feels like there's divine meaning and intention behind it.

So some examples like you heard a certain song on the radio, when a friend texted you with their text message had a similar meaning as the song that triggered an emotion that you had because of a memory that was triggered by breakfast that morning or something like that. And all of a sudden you go, holy cow, God just got in my boat. God just showed up in my car. God is talking to me. God is putting his finger. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? Everybody raised? Yeah, because you know what I'm talking about.

This is Jesus doing that for Peter. And what Jesus is saying to Peter are the two things he needed to hear most. It's the two reasons for his failure. Number one, he was deluded to think, I don't need Jesus. I'm invincible. I'm unstoppable. Then he remembers that moment where Jesus got in his boat and he realized, I'm a sinful man, Lord, get away from me. That should have been his original response. Jesus is recreating the scene of his initial conversion to remind him, you are way worse off than you think you are.

You are so weak, but he doesn't leave him there. He also reminds him that you are far more loved than you could have ever dared to hope. I love you. I am with you. I am here for you. I am not letting you go. So Peter felt a distance in his relationship with the Lord and this is the Lord's way of saying, you may be running from me, but I'm not running from you. I am after

you. I want you to come home. And so what does Peter do? Well, Peter, I'm sure he froze in that moment.

And so in chapter 21 verse seven, John, who was quick to believe when he originally saw the tomb empty, John looks at Peter and he says, Peter, it's the Lord. And when Peter finds out that it's the Lord in response, he stops running away from the Lord and he starts running towards him. And it's really funny John's little commentary. I don't know if John and Peter were like enemies or friendly competition, but he basically embarrasses Peter and says, when Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tied his outer clothing around him because he had taken it off and then he plunged into the sea.

Who does that? Who puts clothes on to get in the water? Nobody puts their clothes on to get in the water. A foolish person, only a crazy person would do that unless like maybe his mom sewed the britches or something. I don't know. But to me it doesn't make sense. I think this is John's way of saying Peter was out of his mind. When Peter realized that the Lord was there and he was calling Peter home, it's like he forgot how to think and he just jumped in the water with all his clothes on and he started swimming to Jesus.

And I love that picture of Peter because that's how most people when God is calling you home and you've been away from the Lord, you feel crazy. You feel messy, you feel like my life's out of control. I don't know what I'm doing. All I know is that maybe God is there. Maybe he's calling me home and so you just jump and you may think to yourself, I don't know what to pray. I don't know what to say. I don't know how to make it look neat and tidy. I feel totally out of place, but you don't have to know everything.

You don't have to make it look neat and tidy. You can be a total mess, so long as you're sincere and authentic and genuinely desiring to go back to the Lord, that's all that's necessary for him to bring you back home. And so Peter gets to the shore. And it's funny, John in verse eight says, we were only 100 yards away, so the rest of us mature people, rode in like normal. We came with a full, dragging a net full of fish, and when they got out on the land, they saw, what did they see?

They saw charcoal fire with fish lying on it and bread. Notice Jesus already has fish and bread, he doesn't need their fish and bread. This is Jesus, I think, his way of saying, I don't need you, Peter. You don't need to defend me, you don't have to provide for me, I can take care of myself. What I need you to do is deal with you. Charcoal fire—which again, that word's mentioned in John 20, or I'm sorry, John chapter 18. It's the only time the words charcoal fire are used, except for this time right here.

This is Jesus not only recreating the scene of the miracle of his conversion. This is Jesus recreating the scene of his greatest regret. This is painful. If that was amazing and joyful, as soon as Peter gets on the shore, he's like, Jesus, I'm back. He's like, not until we have a talk

around the charcoal fire that you warmed yourself around when you denied me. This is how we always recover from failure, not by pretending as though our sin didn't happen or it doesn't matter, but by dealing with it and letting Jesus bring it back to the surface so that we can heal from it and overcome it.

And so he has us revisit the scene of our greatest regret, but he doesn't do so to harm us. Look at what he says. In verse 10, bring some of the fish you've just caught, Jesus told him. So Simon Peter climbed up, he hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 large fish. But even though there were so many, the net was not torn. That's interesting because in Luke five, the nets are torn. It's almost as if Jesus is saying, I'm going to give you an out if you don't want to reconcile and restore you, still have your nets, but come on and have breakfast, Jesus told them.

None of the disciples dared ask him who are you, because they all knew it was the Lord. So Jesus came, took the bread, gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he appeared raised from the dead. So Jesus is inviting them in for breakfast. This is Jesus' way of saying to Peter, even though there's a charcoal fire around there, I'm sure Peter would have imagined if I go near that fire, he is going to berate me, he is going to shame me, and rightly so, I'm a loser, I totally blew it, I deserve the punishment I'm going to get, but instead when Peter comes around the charcoal fire, Jesus says, I'd love to sit down and eat with you.

Let's have some breakfast. Here's some fish, here's some bread. This is the kindness of the Lord. Again, when the Bible talks about repentance, it says that the Lord's kindness is what brings us to repentance. It's not the Lord in the angry sky God with a lightning bolt saying, how dare you and until you come back. That is not the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not the character of our Heavenly Father. He is gentle. He is lowly. Compassionate. He is kind. He's saying if you'll just come to the table we can eat together.

He's restoring the relationship that Peter felt like he could never have back and that's what Jesus will do with you when you return. It's not condemnatory. He does cause pain. I'm sure it was painful for Peter to go back around a charcoal fire but he doesn't cause the pain to hurt you. He causes the pain to heal you and that's exactly what he's going to do with Peter and he heals Peter in ways that are so profound. Everything that Satan destroyed in Peter's life, the arrogant delusion and the distance in the relationship and the lack of meaning and purpose, filling your life with distractions but feeling dejected, Jesus takes all of that brokenness and restores it with this one conversation starting in verse 15.

It says, when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? It's kind of like when your mom calls you by your full name. Yes, Lord, he said to him, you know that I love you. And he says, Feed my lambs. A second time he asked him, Simon, son of John, do you love me? And Peter says, yes, Lord, you know that

I love you. Then shepherd my sheep, he told him. Then he asked him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And Peter was grieved that he asked him the third time, do you love me? And he said, Lord, you know everything. Obviously, based on what Jesus had just done. You know everything. You know that I love you. Then feed my sheep, Jesus said. Truly I tell you, when you were younger you would tie your belt and walk wherever you wanted, but when you grow old you will stretch out your hand and someone else will tie it and carry you where you don't want to go. He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God and after saying this he told them, Follow me.

Now we don't have a lot of time so let me just kind of break this down four ways. This is how Jesus restores in Peter what he lost through his failure. First he restores, first he reconnects Peter to relationship. Now I say that because of this phrase, do you love me more than these? You notice the these, what does the these point to? Commentators debate. Some say that these refers to the fish. The Jesus is pointing to the fish and he's saying Peter, do you love me more than the fish?

Maybe it was the nets because the nets were unbroken. So do you love me more than your nets? Do you love me more than your fishing job? Do you love me more than your old life? Do you love me more than this comfort that you've gone back to say, because maybe it's not Jesus, but at least I don't feel shame all the time. Do you love me more than that? Could be that. It could be that he's pointing to the disciples and he's saying, Peter, do you love me more than these other men?

Do you still think you're invincible? Do you still think you're God's gift to planet earth? Do you still think even if everybody else fails you, I'll never fail you because I'm so much better than everybody else. It could be that as well. Maybe Jesus was pointing to like a disciple who was holding the nets, eating a fish and it was all three combined, you know, I know. That's what I think, because I like to have my cake and eat it too. So he has all of it, all together. I don't know, but the point is, Jesus is inviting Peter back into a relationship.

He's saying, Peter, if you love me more than this, which is obvious you do because you came out of the boat, you're here; you're here having dinner, then let me love you, come back, feed my lambs, feed my sheep, get back on the team, get back to work. He reconnects into a relationship and then he reorients his perspective. And all this is kind of happening at the same time. In my view, when I say he reorients his perspective, this is the reason he asked him three different times, do you love me, do you love me, do you love me?

And three different times he says, feed my sheep, shepherd my sheep, feed my lambs. I think what we all have a tendency to do when we fail is to focus on what happened, to focus on the past, to go back to our failure and to just stew in it, and it's almost therapeutic to hate

yourself in a very sick way. And Jesus is saying, Peter, I can't heal your failure if you're going to stay back there. I need you to go forward. I need you to feed my lambs. I need you to feed my sheep.

I need you to shepherd. I need you to look this way and not that way. And he's reorienting Peter's perspective. I used to think when I was younger, this is just Jesus' way of just beating Peter over the head. Do you love me, Peter? Lord, you know I love you. Well, it didn't look that way. So he's like replaying the film, like my coach would replay the film every time I made a terrible mistake and I'm a little bit traumatized by it still to this day. That's not what Jesus is doing to Peter.

He's not replaying the film. He's again, he's kind, he's compassionate. He's a little bit playful even if you think about it. He's reorienting Peter's perspective. He's reconnecting him to relationship and then most importantly, he's redeeming Peter's shame. He says it three times. Notice what it says on the third time. It says the third time Peter was grieved. Why? Because he said it a third time. This gets back to Jesus making us revisit the scene of the crime. What Jesus will do when he brings you home, maybe he's even doing it this morning, is he will bring with great clarity and emotional spiritual pain, he will bring to the surface the root of the problem.

And at least in my life it's not the external demonstrations of disobedience like you did this wrong and you've made that person mad and you thought this thought and you did this thing and it's not that, it's the root of the problem. It's what unbelief was in your heart that made you think that was good. What made you think that this was going to be more fulfilling than life in God? What Jesus does with Peter, is he bringing to the surface the unbelief in his heart and the sin and the idolatry or whatever it was that was animating Peter's denial.

And he's saying, Peter, this pain, this agony you feel, this embarrassment, this shame, this sin, I paid for this. I died on the cross for this. I've redeemed this. So you don't have to live in it anymore. You need to know it. You need to feel it. You need to feel the weight of it, but don't let it destroy you because I've died on the cross so that that sin could be atoned for. I'm redeeming that pain. So now your worst mistake can be a trophy of God's grace, your weakness.

You can boast in it and be glad in your weakness because God's strength is made perfect there. Your mess of a life can become a message of God's redeeming power and grace, and that's what he does with our sin as well. He doesn't dismiss our sin. It's not as though Jesus says, oh, it's no big deal. That on the cross is all right. That's not the Christian gospel. The Christian gospel is your sin is terrible. It is offensive. It is the reason Jesus died, God who did no wrong, who loved his Heavenly Father perfectly in every way who did not deserve to die, he willingly laid down his life on the cross because of your sin.

Your sin is terrible. Your sin is agonizing. Your sin breaks the heart of your heavenly Father, but in his great love for you he came and he redeemed your sin so that you don't have to live in it anymore, but your worst moment can become an example of God's amazing grace. And I think that's what he's doing with Peter. And then finally he reconnects Peter to ministry. He restores his purpose. Peter, you're never going to find meaning in life fishing. Your meaning and purpose in life is doing what I've called you to do.

And he even tells Peter, if you get back on the team and if you'll let me heal you from your failure, your life is going to be actually pretty challenging. People are going to lead you places you don't want to go and you're going to die a death very similar to the death I died where Peter was crucified upside down is really terrible. But he's connecting Peter to purpose. This is the life that'll give you joy. This is the life that will give you contentment. This is the life through which you can glorify the Lord.

And he would say the same to us this morning. Don't let your failure push you into a life of shame and regret and discontentment and depression. The life in Jesus may be more challenging. It may be filled with persecution and hardship and difficulty, but it is a life full of meaning and purpose because this is how you glorify the Lord. And so I don't know how this lands for you, what this may look like in your life. What I do know is that in a room full of people like us, some of us, God is calling home because he's done it for me and I know he'll do it for you.

And so if you're here this morning and you'd say I identify with Peter, I've kind of failed and I'm doing my own thing, I'm not a terrible person, I'm just here. Maybe Jesus is on the shore saying, You don't have any fish, do you? This life is not giving you what you thought it would give you. Why don't you come home? Why don't you come and deal with this thing that you've been avoiding and let me heal you? Let me make you new. Let me restore the relationship that we've lost.

Let me change the way that you see your failure. Maybe for the first time in your life, you'd say, Jesus, if you can redeem me from my sin, if you can take the mess of my life and save me, I surrender to you. Maybe Jesus, for the first time, is calling you to put your faith in Him as Savior and Lord. He died on the cross so that you don't have to live in shame. And if He's calling you, one of the ways you can publicly not deny Him but pay allegiance to Him, submit to Him, is by publicly surrendering your life to Jesus as Lord in front of everybody gathered here today.

The denials that your life was characterized by can be replaced with a public faith and allegiance to Jesus, this Lord. Maybe for you, it's not the first time of making Jesus Lord, but it is this time and this time matters because you've been running from the Lord doing your own thing, your own way. So how I want us to respond, I'm going to ask a couple of our

pastors or Jace and Terry, if you don't mind coming forward and maybe if there's a female in here that's comfortable praying with somebody that's a female.

Bonnie's over here—yeah, Bonnie can do that. So if you have something you want to pray about or maybe the Lord's kind of developing you a desire to respond, maybe for you it's your child, a son or a daughter, grandchild, grandson, they're running from the Lord and you would say, Lord, I'm praying that you would call them home. You want to intercede, stand in the gap. However the Lord may move in your heart to respond, these people will be here at the front. They'll be happy to receive you. I'll be here as well.

But let's stand together and respond to the Lord as he leads. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time in your word, we pray that as we respond now that you would give us ears to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and a heart of courage to step out in faith and come home if you're calling us home. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.