

<b>Series:</b> Portraits of Jesus	<b>Reference:</b> <i>John 21</i>	<b>Title:</b> The Restorer	<b>Date:</b> 06.28.2020
<b>Website Writeup:</b> Jesus restores Peter after his three denials - preparing him for a future life of loving sacrifice in the name of Christ to be a fisher of men!			

Turn with me to John 21 starting in v1. *Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>“I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

This last chapter of John is ordinary, almost anticlimactic, very intimate & awkward - John brings us back down to earth as the Disciples return to Galilee. They’re on the beach, after the crucifixion & resurrection - what now? They’d seen Jesus twice since the resurrection & now they’re just hanging around. A bunch of guys, after all this excitement, not knowing what to do. Wondering what the heck this all means. When men don’t know what to do they usually have some mindless activity to occupy their minds. Maybe you garden, tinker in the garage, play computer games, or watch Netflix. And Peter says, “I’m goin fishin.” He’s the guy with an old Ford F150 & a bumper sticker, ‘I’d Rather Be Fishin’. The other guys say, “Sounds like a good idea, we’ll go with you.” But they don’t catch a thing.

Verse 4...<sup>4</sup>*Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.*

Jesus comes along while they’re out about hundred yards. They can’t tell it’s him, “Catch anything?” “Nope.” Very ordinary, it’s what guys say when they see another guy fishing.

Verse 6...<sup>6</sup>*He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat & you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. <sup>7</sup>Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup>The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. <sup>9</sup>When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.*

Then, Jesus tells them to do something reminiscent of an earlier time; *“Throw your nets out on the right, you’ll get something.”* They do & get a lot. This had happened before, in the very beginning of their time together. Jesus was in a boat with Peter & told him to throw the nets out, at that time the catch was also huge. So much that other boats were called over to help & they were sinking under the weight. Peter said, *“Depart from me,*

*for I am a sinful man, Lord.*” If you remember, Jesus says, *“Now you will be fishers of men.”* Jesus has a sense of humor, almost recreating the scene to let them know it’s Him. It’s interesting, this huge catch bookends His time with them, reminiscent of His last command which is our first concern in Matthew 28:18-20 to go & make disciples of all nations. Jesus is trying to communicate His ultimate purpose for them as He is about to leave them.

John says to Peter, *“It’s the Lord!”* If Thomas is a natural skeptic, Peter’s naturally impulsive. He’s the one who got out of the boat in Matthew 14 trying to walk on water, which he did until he sank. He’s the one who ran past John into the tomb making himself ceremonially unclean, but does it without thinking. He’s the one in the Garden of Gethsemane who drew his sword cutting off the guys ear. Earlier he had said to Jesus, *“Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.”* (Mt 26:33) & *“Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!”* (Mt 26:35) And here he jumps out of the boat swimming to Jesus, leaving the other guys to haul in the load. He can’t contain his excitement, like little kids running to Dad after work. This excitement & impulsivity is endearing, at times respectable, but not always helpful.

Peter was leader & spokesman for the 12 disciples (Mark 8:29; Matt. 17:24). He often posed questions to Jesus representing concerns of the others (Matt. 15:15; 18:21; Mark 11:21; Luke 12:41). His name is first in the list of names of the disciples (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14) and the inner circle (Peter, James, and John, in Mark 5:35-41; 9:2-8; 14:33, 43-50). Peter sometimes had little faith. He was sometimes presumptuous (Matt. 16:22; John 13:8; 18:10) sometimes timid (Matt. 14:30; 26:69-72). Sometimes self-seeking (Matt. 19:27). Sometimes self-sacrificing (Mark 1:18). Sometimes spiritually perceptive (Matt. 16:16; John 6:68). Sometimes slow on the uptake (Matt. 15:15-16). He walked on water with Jesus, but his faith waned & he sank (Matt. 14:28-31). He says, *“You are the Messiah”* (Matt. 16:16 HCSB), then turns around saying, *“I don’t know that guy”* (Mark 14:71).<sup>1</sup>

Don’t you feel like Peter sometimes? Back & forth, excited, then sheepish because your excitement gets you in trouble. Full of faith in one moment & doubt the next. Peter’s an ordinary guy, a man’s man. He gives me hope. I bumble through life as Peter did. At times, I’m on my game, at others, I have to pull my foot out of my mouth! That’s Peter, impetuous, strong, excitable, wavering, the Rock, which is what Peter or Cephas means. A name Jesus will make sure Peter grows into.

Verse 10...<sup>10</sup>*Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”* <sup>11</sup>*So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat & dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.* <sup>12</sup>*Jesus said to them, “Come & have breakfast.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1281-1282). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

So, they're on the beach. Peter drags in the fish. Jesus had made breakfast & a fire getting them comfortable. A mini MANcation, or a camping trip. And as they eat & talk, I'd imagine Peter's thinking, "This is the third time I've seen Jesus, maybe He's *NOT* gonna bring up the denial thing."

No such luck Peter - Verse 15...<sup>15</sup>*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

"Shoot, thought we could avoid this." Remember, it was Jesus who'd given him the name Peter at their first meeting, "*You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas*" (which means Peter - Jn 1:42). Or, the Rock. Yet Jesus uses his former name now, Simon son of John - maybe because Peter hadn't shown himself to be a rock lately. Maybe Jesus wants Peter to recall a time before he'd known Jesus. Peter had denied Jesus, maybe this was Jesus' way of saying, "Well is that the way you want it? What's it gonna be, Simon son of John, or Simon Peter the Rock? Honestly Peter, do you really want to live life without me?"

Verse 16...<sup>16</sup>*Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."*

Twice, that's gotta hurt, but then in Verse 17...<sup>17</sup>*The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."*

Three times, then it dawns, maybe on Peter, but definitely on us, Jesus asked this question three times by a fire, because Peter had denied Him three times by a fire. One of Peter's first experiences with Jesus was catching a boat load of fish, as he does in this story. The first time Jesus says, "*You will be fishers of men.*" Now He's urging Peter to feed His sheep. The parallels in the stories are clear. This was calculated, Jesus knew what He was doing, Peter had to face the denial issue to be restored & restoration hurts. For as many times as he denied Jesus, Peter had to be confronted in order to get him to fully understand & move forward in relationship with Jesus. Jesus was going away, leaving this man, Peter the Rock, to continue His ministry to others - but Peter hadn't shown himself reflective of his new moniker. Peter had to realize that to love Jesus means to love others, to stand with Jesus in self-sacrifice. To match words of love & devotion with sacrificial action.

Halfway through my time in Indonesia, my parents came to visit. It was a stressful season of life, culture shock & strained team relationships were overwhelming me. I was not handling it well & took it out on Kim. She had to live with a grumpy, whiney jerk, who could do nothing but snap at her. My parents came for about 2 weeks. At the end of the trip my dad did what Jesus did. Jesus made Peter comfortable by a fire, fed him & prepared him. My father took me to a nice hotel in Jakarta, fed me, gave me some rest & loosened me up. But I know my father & my father knows me - this was calculated &

planned. He was buttering me up. He has that uncanny ability to see right through my crap, I knew I was going to have to face myself.

I'll never forget walking out to the pool area, seeing my wife talking with my father across the patio. As I came closer, Kim got up & walked the opposite way - I assumed my dad told her to take a walk in order to have a heart to heart with me. My father turned to me & said gently & with a smile, "Son, come here, let's talk" My surroundings didn't matter anymore, my focus was going inward. My father was going to make me face myself - it was gonna be awkward. I didn't like it, but needed it. If my relationship with my wife was to be restored, I needed to listen.

We walked, he talked & asked me questions. The same questions over & over in different ways, I got the message. It was this, "Son, I need you to look at what you have done. I need you to turn your gaze inward & look at the hurt you have caused your wife & others." I grew a bit perturbed as he methodically pressed me, but had to man up. I couldn't fight the constant questioning, since I had constantly tormented my wife, I wasn't proud of it - I was repentant.

I'll never forget that conversation. It hurt, but I am grateful my father loved me enough to have it. I cherish that painful encounter. When I slip back into that grumpy, whiney mode, I remember it. The memory helps me to recall how cherished these relationships are - it matters what I say & do - that words of love are backed up by loving action.

Peter's getting a talking to from His father. It hurts. Jesus wasn't cruel, rather he cut like a surgeon in order to heal & restore. The message from my father was this, will you sacrifice for your wife, will you die to self for her? Because only in sacrifice & dying to self can you have full relationship with her. The message was the same for Peter, because Jesus now lays out his future for him...

*Verse 18...<sup>18</sup>Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself & went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you & lead you where you do not want to go."<sup>19</sup>Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"*

Jesus was telling Peter, you need to be restored to me. You need to say three times you love me, not for me, but for yourself. Because following me must lead you to sacrifice for for Christ & others. And you'll finally face the ultimate sacrifice, death for this kingdom ministry, you need to be convinced this relationship is worth it. 1 John 4:17 says it succinctly, "As He is in this world, so are we." Jesus is the suffering servant, we are the suffering servant. It's almost easier to face a literal cross than it is to sacrifice for others over & over - to feed the sheep when it hurts. Yet, even though Peter seems to be fairly repentant here, he does what we all do when someone gets too close to our heart - he tries to turn the focus onto the other guy as we see in Jn 21:20-21...

*<sup>20</sup>Peter turned & saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper & had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) <sup>21</sup>When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”*

Peter sees John walking behind them & says, what about him? Deflection. Peter feels the finger of God pressing against his heart & wants it off - what about him? What about the other guy Jesus? Are you going to ask the same from them? Why do I have to be pressed so hard, don't they have to do the same? Have you ever been in a real heart wrenching conflict with someone. One which hurts, since due to that conflict you're forced to see some ugly flaw in yourself? In those instances self-preservation takes over. You'll do anything to point the finger at the other guy.

My brother, who had left the corporate world to be a pastor at a large church in Florida, said to me one day, “Church politics are worse than corporate politics.” As they should be, because in the corporate world we fire people & move them around. The heart doesn't matter to the economics of business ruled by the laws of corporate policy. But Church is governed by grace, hard toothy grace which stabs at tender places. Our first inclination shouldn't be to just fire or move people around. Rather, we must realize God often puts a person in our path who brings out the worst in us, so He can deal with that thing which stands in the way of our relationship with Him. Iron sharpening iron.

It's much less about the person you're in conflict with & more about your heart before Jesus. Are you willing to be hurt by Jesus, to be cut deeply in order to heal stronger? Are you willing to sacrifice that which is so dear to you for the sake of Jesus? And that means for the sake of others, since the relationship between Me & Jesus is played out in the relationship between me & you - as He is in this world so are we.

When Kim & I were dating, certain issues were discussed. She had hers, I had mine. They seemed so important at the time, neither of us would budge. A stalemate occurred. We broke up. Issues broke relationship, since neither of us wanted to say, you're more important than my pet issue. I'm hard pressed to say what those issues are today & they haven't come up for these 28 years of marriage - what was so important then, is non-issue now.

I remember the day we got back together, we took a walk, stopped & talked in a park. I was scared, what if I sacrifice & she doesn't. What if I give up my treasure & she doesn't reciprocate by giving up hers? What if I put my heart out there & she smashes it? Will it hurt? Maybe. There are no promises in love & war, only risk - but risk worth taking. When we could finally say, you're more important to me than my deep rooted desire of self-preservation, then we could move forward in relationship.

Peter was in a love relationship with Jesus. During the trial Peter had chosen to self-protect - I don't know that guy. I could get hurt! His lofty words of devotion dissipate in the face of pain. And Jesus does know all things, He knew below the fear, below the self-preservation, below the scared little boy, Peter did love Jesus. Peter had to come to terms with just how much that love would cost - to be willing to pay the price of self-

sacrifice. Jesus was asking him to be willing to die to himself for this kingdom ministry - to be a fisher of men. Will his future actions match his words of devotion?

Three “invitations” stand out in John’s Gospel: “Come & see” (John 1:39); “Come & drink” (John 7:37); and “Come & dine” (John 21:12). Come, eat & have relationship with me, it’s the final message of John’s Gospel - sacrificing self in order to know the deep life with Jesus. “Peter, do you love Me - as you claimed - more than these other disciples love Me?” Peter was prideful enough to compare his love with the other men. He’d already said, “I will lay down my life for your sake!” (John 13:37) “Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away!” (Matt. 26:33). Peter’s pride was evident, but pride must be killed for the sake of relationship - pride is poison in relationships.

Kim & I watch *Alone*, a show where they stick people out by themselves in a rugged wilderness with only a choice of ten different items to bring & survive by themselves. In one episode, they showed a contestant on his porch with family & friends before he left. One of his friends asks, “What if you encounter a bear?” And with all the bravado of a teenage boy he says, “They better call for help for the bear! I’ll take him out!” That guy tapped out before one night after they dropped him off as soon as he saw bear scat near his camping site! Pride comes before a fall! Peter was going through the painful surgery of having his pride confronted - finding out he was just as weak & screwed up as everyone else.

Tradition has it that after this Peter was no longer so impetuous or impulsive. He matured, counted the costs, and put down his self-preservation & followed. After Pentecost (Acts 2:1) he was bold when persecuted. Arrested twice & warned to refrain from preaching about Jesus (Acts 4:1–22; 5:12–40). Herod imprisoned Peter with intent to execute him (Acts 12:3–5). But he was freed & delivered by an angel (Acts 12:6–11). Church tradition tells us that Jesus prediction was correct, Peter’s arms were stretched out. He was dressed in the shroud of death & led to the cross to be crucified. But, he was crucified upside down because he didn’t feel deserving to die upright like Jesus - to the end still a little over the top, but at least now it was in the line of self-sacrifice. At least Peter’s actions finally matched his words.

Will you let Jesus wound you? Will you give up your self-protection & follow? Will you eat with Him? Will we be as He is in this world - carrying out the ministry of the kingdom to others. Bringing more & more into the kingdom, loving them closer to Jesus. Because Jesus doesn’t call us to safety, but to battle won through self-sacrifice. Will our words of devotion be matched with acts of sacrifice when it all hits the fan? Or will we self-preserve, walk away & say, I don’t know that guy?

How do we sacrifice for others?

- Discipleship - get out of yourself
- Loving Actions & Words towards someone - love them into the kingdom
- Are you in a conflict, do you need to lay down your weapons?
- Does your time belong to Jesus?
- Finances - money is a tool of the kingdom

## Community Group Questions

1. What's one of your most embarrassing or awkward moments?
2. Has anyone ever lovingly challenged you which made you better?
3. Read the passage out loud together: Jhn 21:1-21
4. What are your impressions as you read this story?
5. Does anything particularly stand out?
6. What is your impression of Peter, do you relate, do you find him too impulsive?
7. If you had been Peter during the Crucifixion scenes, would you have caved or stood firm? Why?
8. How would you have felt if you were Peter each time Jesus asked these questions?
9. What was Jesus doing? Do you find it cruel or demeaning? Why? Do you find it helpful & leading? If so, why?
10. What's the cost of following Jesus for Peter? Have you counted the costs, or experienced them in your life?
11. What are some of the largest situations we face right now which may reveal the costs of following Jesus? How can you follow Him well despite those costs?