

SERMON - April 23, 2017 "Walking After the Cross: Remember His Plan and Your Part"
Scripture: John 21:1-25

TITLE SLIDE John 21:1-25 – What Now? Remembering His Plan and Our Part

Summary: We'll be reviewing the third resurrection appearance of Jesus and how it challenges us to live our lives in light of the fact that Jesus IS alive and He has plans for each one of us.

How do we walk after the cross is over?

- Life goes on ... the disciples have gone back to fishing.
- Do we just go back to our jobs ... to our routines ... to our relative dysfunction! Or do we go back to meaning ... purpose ... life!

What does the Bible tell us? Here's a reminder from last Sunday:

SLIDE 2 1 Corinthians 15:17-20

¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

SLIDE 3 Christ has indeed been raised. So what does that mean about us?

SLIDE 4 1. Your faith is not futile.

- We don't serve a dead Lord! All over the world, many people are putting their trust in dead things, and it's all in vain. Yet, as we were reminded last Sunday, death is no longer something Christians need to fear – since God raised Jesus from the dead – he can and will raise "all those who belong to Christ" from the dead.

SLIDE 5 2. Our hope is not in this life.

- If we were living the life of Christians now and it turned out we were wrong – that we really aren't going to live beyond this life – we'd deserve the world's pity. Everything we're counting on would be a farce. But Jesus is alive, and our hope goes beyond this life.

The resurrection of Jesus is pivotal to all we believe. Jesus is alive, and he helped verify that resurrection by deliberately appearing to His followers over a period of 40 days. Last week we also read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8:

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

In verse 14 of our text in John 21 today, Jesus makes one of those appearances. John points out that it's Jesus' third appearance – at least to the group. And each time Jesus makes an appearance, it has a purpose: **The resurrection really happened.**

Obviously, Jesus wanted them to see that He is alive. There were enough eye-witnesses and enough credible accounts about the resurrection to accept that it's real. The events around Jesus' resurrection were so significant and were experienced by people so diverse that they could not be denied.

We can point to prophecy fulfilled by Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; and we can read the testimony of eyewitnesses. Yet the ultimate proof that Jesus is the resurrected Savior of mankind is best shown by the change that takes place in our lives when He and the Father make their home in us (John 14:23).

²³Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

The living Christ in us is the incontrovertible proof of Jesus' resurrection—He proves it daily by interacting directly and indirectly in our thoughts and in our lives.

Jesus really did rise from the dead. When Thomas doubted it, He came and showed Himself to Thomas. He wanted His followers to believe that He really was alive, just as He had predicted.

Another reason for His appearances is to give his followers: **Reminders**

Let's review our text for today to see the first reminder. It was a deliberate reminder from Jesus for His disciples, and it's the same kind of reminder for us as we read it.

READ John 21:1-14

SLIDE 6 1. Remember His Plan

This was not just a coincidence. We are so privileged to be able to view God's design in stories like this, having the whole context of the Bible in our possession. You can see it in the way John writes it for us. This event pointed back to another day some 3 years earlier on the same Sea of Galilee. For all we know, it may have even been the same boat! In Luke 5 we read that at least four of these same fishermen had fished all night without a single fish. Jesus told them to try one more time. This may have seemed ridiculous to these experienced fisherman, just like it had 3 years before. And yet, just like 3 years before, they obeyed, and ended up with a net so full of fish they could hardly handle it.

SLIDE 7 (wait until I start recounting the story – mid-paragraph) Three years before, Peter was confronted with the fact that this man standing in front of him was more than just a man. His response was, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Still Jesus would urge Peter to follow Him and He would focus him on capturing the souls of men. This time John (the author of this account) recognises the signs right away (go figure! – check out John 20:8) 1) Fish all night 2) Caught nothing 3) Man tells us to try again 4) Catch more fish than we can even handle = "This is the Lord!" As in the first account, Peter's a first responder

again. He jumps overboard (after putting his shirt back on?!) and heads for the shore. This time, all of them realize **who** Jesus is. No one questions that. In both stories, the accounts lead to Jesus inviting these men to "Follow Me."

(Shown on Slide 7)

John 21

- That night they caught nothing
- "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."
- They were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish
- The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish
- He said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:19)

Luke 5

- We've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything
- "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."
- They caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break
- They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink
- "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!" (Matthew 4:19)

A week after Easter Sunday, we see the story coming full circle. At the cross – Jesus' followers saw their hopes (apparently) crushed. They witnessed what they thought was God's plan, but it was different than they thought all along. Yet now:

- They've seen Jesus on three occasions since He arose
- They are reminded of WHO Jesus is and WHAT Jesus can do - Just like 3 years before there's a miracle to show these men who Jesus is, and a subsequent call from Jesus to trust and follow Him.
- They are reminded about WHO they are called to be – more than just fishermen ... they are called to be a part of God's plan to save the souls of men.

A reminder is here for us as well – We're called to live our lives in light of the fact that Jesus IS alive! He has work for each of us to do.

God's plan for salvation is the same for everybody. It's not subjective. It's not going to be graded on the curve. It's the same for everyone, with no preferential treatment.

Galatians 3:26-28

²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Yet God's plan is also uniquely personal. We see this in Peter's interaction and conversation with Jesus. Peter was the only person who had done exactly what Peter had done. Peter was the only person who needed what Jesus was going to do for him after they finished breakfast on the seashore. **So, let's continue in our text at verse 15 and remember our part.**

SLIDE 8 2. Remember Your Part

John 21:15-17

¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶He 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." ¹⁷He 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.

It appears that this was now a private conversation between Jesus and Peter. Though there are some nuances in Jesus's questions – the critical purpose appears to be the three-fold asking of the questions. If you recall, Peter had been told by Jesus that he would deny him three times. Then, just as predicted, Peter was asked 3 times if he was Jesus's follower while Jesus was being put on trial --- and Peter denied he even knew Jesus.

Now here, on the shores of Galilee, Jesus is essentially asking, "Are you really one of mine? Do you really love Me?" On the third asking, John tells us that Peter was grieved. Why? Of course because Peter knew full well he had denied even knowing Jesus – just as Jesus predicted. Peter knew he had failed his Master. Jesus knew Peter had failed. Now, it was time to confront the failure.

Have you ever let someone down? They knew it, you knew it, and it created an awkwardness between the two of you. Rather than talking about it, you let it linger there, and it became a real barrier in your relationship. How much better it would have been if one of you had said to the other, "Hey, we need to talk. This issue is in the way. Let's deal with it and be done with it." Keeping short accounts is essential to sustaining a healthy relationship. That's what Jesus is doing for Peter. Ok, no more awkwardness. No more pretending it didn't happen. "Peter, let's deal with your failure."

When it comes to remembering your part in God's plan, remember this: your failures are a part of it. Our failures are what made it necessary for Jesus to come and die in the first place. So, don't look at the cross and blame the angry Jews. Don't blame the Roman soldiers. When we look at the cross we remember that sin is really that serious – our sins cost Jesus dearly. Yet Jesus dealt with our failure.

SLIDE 9 He deals with our sin and failure with three stunning words: You are forgiven.

Confronting failure is awkward. It's never easy. In Peter's case, the text says it "grieved" him. We can understand that. Here was Peter, face to face with Jesus, and discussing the way he had denied he even knew Jesus – Peter, who had said, "Everyone else may deny You, Lord, but not me! I will lay down my life for you!" yet ended up denying knowing Jesus. But there was not a rebuke. There was no need for one. Peter had already repented of his mess-up. He was deeply and genuinely sorry.

Matthew 16:18-19 reminds us that this is the same man to whom Jesus said:

¹⁸And 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. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

In the book of Acts, on the day of Pentecost – the day the Church was born – it would be Peter who stands up and preaches. Jesus has a unique plan for Peter. Jesus is going to trust him with the care of His people in the early Church. Not only was his failure forgiven, I believe Jesus could now entrust Peter with even greater responsibility now that this unique refining work had been done in Peter's life. **Remember those pillar moments in your own life? Those moments from which you can not "go back" from?** How often does what we learn from those refining seasons of life shape our character and purpose?

If you're a follower of Jesus this morning, here's the greatest reminder: You are forgiven!

Whatever you did to let Jesus down, it's forgiven. You need to confront it. You need to freely admit your failure. Yet also, you need to understand that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Jesus died on the cross and God raised him from the dead to overcome sin and death – so you do not need to live in your sin any longer.

As we are reminded that Jesus still had plans to use Peter, it ought to remind us this morning that there's still hope for each one of us. **We see this hope in our final section of John 21 starting in verse 18 – as we remember who we follow.**

SLIDE 10 3. Remember Who We Follow

John 21:18-22

¹⁸Truly, 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." ²⁰Peter 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?" ²¹When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²²Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

How would you receive a word like this from Jesus? There are some seriously tough days ahead – and would you want to know if that future laid ahead of you? Jesus not only tells Peter these days are coming – but that when they come he wanted Peter to follow him. I'm not sure I'd want to know if my future contained the day that I'd be arrested and suffer death for being a follower of Jesus. Yet as Peter takes in this serious update, he sees his fellow disciple John - who is following them, and he asks, "What about him?"

Has that ever happened to you – instead of dealing with the information in front of you, you are too busy wondering what's going to happen to others? Jesus shows us here that he doesn't want us to waste time worrying about *what others "get" from Him.*

Illustration: In Matthew chapter 20 there's a story about a vineyard owner who hired some people to work his grapes, agreeing to pay them a denarius for the day. Then, he went out and found some more, and 3 hours later, some more, and 3 hours later, some more, and then, right near the end of the workday, he went out and found some more. The day ended, and he lined up the workers to receive their pay. He started with guys who had worked the least, and he gave each of them one denarius. When the guys who had worked all day got their one denarius, they started complaining. "No fair! We worked all day, did most the work, and you're paying these guys the same!"

What about today? Maybe in our own church the statement could go something like this:

- No fair! I've been a member here for 20 years, and they just showed up!
- No fair! I give a whole lot more than that person even can!
- No fair! Why should she get to pick the colors?
- Why should he be asked to give his opinion when I wasn't?
- Why should the youth group get to say how it goes?
- Why should the senior saints get preferential treatment?
- Why should that group get to pick the room they'll use?
- Why should they get to set the schedule?
- How come they get a bigger chunk of the budget?

I think you get the point.

So the vineyard owner tells the jealous workers, "I'm not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I'm generous?"

Jesus' response to Peter's question reminds me a lot of this parable. Peter has just been told that some day, he's going to die for Jesus. He's going to be bound and killed. Peter sees John walking behind them. "OK, Jesus, what about him?" And Jesus' response puts Peter's attention back where it ought to be, rather than "what does John get out of this deal? How does John compare to me?" Jesus says, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." In other words, don't worry about what your brother or sister in Christ gets. Don't get caught up in whether or not it's "fair."

If we all got what we deserved we wouldn't even be here anyway, amen? So, when it comes to these kinds of questions, you have a first priority: **follow Jesus**. *Please don't make your loyalty to Jesus dependent on someone else.*

Jesus IS alive – and we will each personally answer to Him before we answer to one another.

Conclusion:

Illustration - A man rises to face his day like usual. This day, however, he has a doctor appointment. He's had to work really hard to fit it into his busy schedule. He expected the doctor to be a long wait and to have to allow for that extra time. What he didn't expect, though, was to hear that he might have a malignant tumor. What were the odds? The doctor couldn't be sure. Tests were scheduled, a biopsy. It was going to be a couple weeks. Then, it would be another week before the results came back. Finally, the day came for the

follow-up visit with the doctor. No cancer! What a relief! No chemotherapy. No radiation. No surgery, even.

So, does he go back to life just like before? Not a chance! He just had a brush with death. What used to look so important before doesn't look as important now. Spending more time with the people he loves takes on a higher priority. He now has a tendency to change a conversation to something more important than the weather. He's been given back his life when he feared it could be over. He won't go on living just like it never happened. Things have changed.

Having been to the cross, and now the empty tomb, how will that change the way we live?

SLIDE 11 & 12 In Peter's case, we see that his life would never be the same again. The **fact** of the resurrection just proved without a shadow of doubt that Jesus was exactly who He claimed to be. It helped give an extraordinary boldness to an ordinary fisherman.

For most of recorded history there have been men who've claimed to be something. Yet not one of them ever claimed he'd come back to life to prove it. The resurrection separates Jesus from every other person. What we're talking about here isn't just some good man.

Jesus is God's Son – and it is only His life, death, and resurrection that takes away the sin of the world.

How should we live? Like people who've been died for. Like people who've been forgiven! Like people who can be forgiven!

This message is for all of us this morning. You're either one or the other. You're either living your life in the shadow of God's plan for you, or you're ignoring it and hoping it will go away.

I hope that as you see the evidence of WHO Jesus is – and WHAT he has done – it will compel you to trust Him with your life. I believe without a shadow of doubt that He has a wonderful plan for you and that plan can begin once you surrender your life to him.

SLIDE 13 More than anyone else, Jesus is the one worth following! So, I encourage you:

Follow Jesus.

