

ARE WE THERE YET? PASSING THE MANTLE JESUS & PETER

(JOHN 21:1-17)

BEFORE THE LESSON

This encounter between our Lord Jesus and Peter represents Peter's public restoration to his apostolic ministry. Peter had denied Jesus three times, and three times Jesus repeats the essential question, "Do you love me? These three questions hit Peter repeatedly like hammer blows to drive the point home regarding the way God had used his past failures to humble him. His restoration is completed when Jesus entrusts important work to him, even in light of his failures.

STARTING THE LESSON

Tonight we will follow-up with our final companion study for the "Are We There Yet" sermon series. We will study John 21 verses 1-17. These verses speak about Jesus' appearance to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. The disciples had spent the night fishing and had not caught any fish. Jesus had instructed them on their return to throw their nets over one more time, and they were unable to haul in all of the fish they caught. He then serves them breakfast cooked over a fire he had laid on the beach (I would have liked to be there for that breakfast...), and engages with Peter in a life-changing conversation.

BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCE

John 21:1-17

¹ Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way:

² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.

³ "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.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵ He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

⁶ He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ 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.

⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

STARTER QUESTION

- Take a moment and think about times throughout your life, perhaps specifically in the last few months, when you have felt more was asked of you than you had to give.
- Would anyone like to share an experience where you failed at something and were changed and restored by God afterwards?

OPENING PRAYER

Thank God for each person who is there, ask God for understanding, and transformation to take place in each person's life, ask God to bless each person and show his favor on them. Pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your time together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1

- Take turns reading John 21:1-17 aloud. Then take a couple minutes as a group imagining the scene – Peter and the other disciples fishing, Jesus preparing a fire and cooking breakfast on the shore, the overwhelming catch of fish, Jesus' conversation with Peter. Invite group members to share their sense of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and overall experience of this morning for the disciples involved.

Answers will vary, but leave room for people to use their imaginations as they consider and describe this scene and these events.

QUESTION 2

- What one piece of advice does Jesus give to the disciples regarding their fishing? What happens? What does this likely remind Peter of?

Jesus tells them where to cast the net, and they catch a great quantity of fish. This undoubtedly reminds Peter of an early encounter he had with Jesus (see Luke 5), where

BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCE

John 21:1-17 (Cont'd)

¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ 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."

¹⁷ 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."

something very similar happened to Peter and his companions after they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing.

QUESTION 3

- What is one possible takeaway regarding the disciples' huge catch of fish after casting the net where Jesus said to?

Answers may vary, but this is a wonderful picture of how our own labors yield little or nothing, but simple obedience to Jesus yields much. This is also an encouraging picture of the apostolic fruitfulness that Peter and the other disciples could expect going forward, as well as our own fruitfulness.

QUESTION 4

- In verses 15-17, Jesus asks Peter three questions about his love for Jesus. In the first two questions, Jesus uses the Greek word *agape*, which refers to deep, sacrificial love. Peter answers him using the Greek word *phileo*, which refers to affectionate, brotherly love. Why do you think Peter was unwilling to claim at this point that he would love Jesus deeply and sacrificially?

Peter had been humbled by his failures, and by his denial of Jesus, and was hesitant to boast again about his faithfulness.

QUESTION 5

- What do you think Jesus means by "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"

Jesus was asking Peter whether he loved him more than the other disciples did. Before his denial, Peter had boasted that though everyone else might fall away, he would never do so, and would even go with him to death. Jesus was now helping Peter see that he had been humbled by his failures and was now unwilling to boast about his faithfulness.

QUESTION 6

- Why do you think Jesus pressed Peter so much on whether he loved him? Do you think that was cruel? Why or why not?

He likely wanted Peter to face his own failures, and also to avoid boasting again of his future exploits. Jesus was helping Peter to see the way that his failures had changed him, and had made him a more mature and humble man. Jesus was actually expressing

kindness and mercy to Peter in helping him to face his failures and yet still see himself as useful and beloved to Jesus.

QUESTION 7

- What is the relevance of Jesus asking Peter three times?

Peter had denied Jesus three times under the pressure of being questioned about his relationship with Jesus.

QUESTION 8

- When Jesus restored Peter, what were the tasks he assigned to Peter?

To feed his lambs, tend his sheep, feed his sheep, i.e. to care tenderly for the church.

QUESTION 9

- How do you think it felt to Peter that even though he had failed so badly, Jesus still entrusted him with significant responsibility?

Answers will vary

QUESTION 10

- In what ways do you think this exchange was transformational for Peter?

It gave Peter the courage and strength to move forward on his mission to serve the Lord and his people, even in light of his past failures.

QUESTION 11

- What is one way you sense God inviting you to respond to him in light of this passage of Scripture?

Answers will vary.

PRAYER MINISTRY

- Suggestion 1: Take a minute or two to welcome the Holy Spirit and to wait in God's presence together. After a short time of waiting, invite group members to share any words, scriptures, etc. that they have sensed from God. Also, ask if there is anyone present who particularly relates to Peter in his failure and restoration, and if so, invite them to receive prayer.

- Suggestion 2: Invite your group to spend some time praying together for people in the church – for the sheep and lambs that Jesus refers to with Peter. Consider breaking down into small groups to pray.