

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 21.1-25



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

*And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,
He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 21.1-25
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Introduction to *John 21.1-25*

John's gospel comes to its end, as the Lord lays the foundation for the work that will continue once He has ascended to glory.

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1 Fishing for Fishermen

Read and meditate on John 21.1-6.

Jesus interrupts a fishing party to remind His disciples of the real fishing to which they've been called.

¹Now after these things, Jesus showed Himself beside the sea to His disciples. Here is how it went:
²When Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), and two disciples more had gathered, ³then said Peter, "I am going fishing." And they all said, "We are going also." So immediately, they went out in the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴When the day came, Jesus stood there on shore, but they did not know it was He. ⁵He called out to them, "Children, have you landed any food?" They answered, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Now cast your net out on the right, and then at last you will catch fish." And so they did, and then they caught so great a multitude, that when they tried to draw the net in, they could not.

- John 21.1-6

Reflect

1. We should not fault the disciples for going fishing, as though Peter and the others had given up on their mandate to fish for men, and were reverting to their former vocations. They are no longer in Jerusalem, but Galilee (John calls the sea Tiberius, because, writing late in the first century, that's how it had come to be known). Why do you suppose Jesus chose to make Himself known to the disciples here, and at just this time? Complete this prayer: *Lord, let me never lose sight of the fact that You have called me to...*
2. John is specific about five of the participants in this fishing party, three of whom he names, while two he leaves unnamed. We should ask why. First, why do you think he mentions Thomas? Would it be important for John to mention that, despite his doubting, Thomas was still one of the disciples? How should we be encouraged by this? *I doubt sometimes, Lord, and sometimes I simply deny or disobey You, so I'm...*
3. Now let's think about Peter. Look at Luke 5.1-11. Why would this setting have been apt for Jesus to make Himself known to Peter? Why might He have wanted to do so? Are any particular places, people, or events associated with your coming to faith in Jesus? Do you think it might be a good idea to revisit those occasionally, even if only in prayer? Explain. *Thank You, Lord for the people who*

helped come to Jesus, especially...

4. What about Nathanael? Where did Jesus first encounter him (Jn. 1.43ff)? Do you suppose Nathanael might have recalled Jesus' promise about seeing greater things (Jn. 1.50)? How might this have affected him? *Lord, bring to my mind promises that You have made, so that...*

5. Finally, this episode recalls a variety of Jesus' works, which He did with or before His disciples during His earthly sojourn. How many can you think of? Do you suppose the disciples might have recalled some of those miracles as well? Would this have affected them positively? Is it a good idea to maintain "memorials" concerning important points in our walk with the Lord, and to recall those from time to time? How can doing this help us in our walk with and work for the Lord? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"Having then nothing to do, they went fishing, and they did this at night because they were terribly frightened. Luke also mentions this, but this is not the same occasion. And the other disciples followed because from that time on they were bound to one another, and at the same time desired to see the fishing and use their leisure time well. While they were working and tired, Jesus presents himself before them and does not reveal himself all at once so that they enter into conversation with him." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Jesus appeared to His disciples many times during the 40 days following His resurrection until He ascended to heaven (cf. Acts 1.1-11). This one, however, seems deliberately contrived to accomplish several purposes. Explain.

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
I have set the LORD always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16.7-11

Psalm 16.7-11 (*All to Christ: Jesus Paid It All*)

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night;
You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right.
Make me know life's way; pleasures fill Your hand;
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.
But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.

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Make me know life's way; pleasures fill Your hand;
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,
You will come to gather me to my home with You in heav'n.
Make me know life's way; pleasures fill Your hand;
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

2 Some Catch!

Read and meditate on John 21.7-11.

This almost comedic scene is full of pathos and hope.

⁷Thus, when he saw the many fish they caught, the one whom Jesus loved to Peter said, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he put his garment on (he had removed it), and abruptly plunged into the sea. ⁸Meanwhile, the rest came in the little boat (they were not from the land so far away), and dragged with them the haul of fish which they had caught. ⁹And when they all arrived on shore, a fire was burning, laid on it were fish, and bread. ¹⁰Then Jesus said, “Bring here some of the fish which you have caught.” ¹¹So Simon Peter dragged the net, all taut and full of fish (153, to be exact) to land – it might have seemed the net should have been broken, but it was not.

- John 21.7-11

Reflect

1. Evidently John – only barely disguising himself out of humility – was the first to understand what was happening here. How do you suppose John reached the conclusion he announced to Peter? When Jesus is present and His Word is working, should we expect to see certain effects? Such as? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, be at work in me, so that there will be no doubt in anyone's mind that...*
2. How should we understand Peter's response to John's comment? This seems a little hasty, if not silly, don't you think? But is something more urgent and serious at work here? Is there counsel for us in Peter's response to the knowledge that Jesus was here and at work? *Lord Jesus, let me never hesitate to...*
3. The other six disciples were left “holding the bag,” so to speak. Why do you suppose they didn't throw themselves into the sea and start swimming madly to Jesus? John was with them, although he probably hadn't told them what he told Peter (we can guess why!). What were these fishermen thinking? *At all times, Lord, the work you've given us to do – our jobs, homes, and other kinds of work – are exactly where you want us to...*
4. A warm fire and breakfast (v. 4) await the disciples as they come to shore. Who had prepared this? What does it tell us about Jesus' resurrection body that He could do this? What do you make of Jesus' inviting the disciples to bring some of their fish to the meal? *Thank You, Lord, that You always*

provide just what we need, and You are always willing to use what...

5. John mentions that there were so many fish in the net that it should have broken, but did not. When Jesus is at work, ordinary things get stretched beyond their typical limits, so that they can do the work Jesus intends for them. Apply that to your daily life in your Personal Mission Field. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“The question also arises as to why, after his resurrection, the Lord stood on the shore while his disciples were laboring in the sea, when before his resurrection he walked on the waves of the sea in his disciples’ sight.... What does the sea indicate but this present age, which is tossed about by the uproar of circumstances and the waves of this corruptible life? What does the solidity of the shore signify but the uninterrupted continuity of eternal peace? Therefore since the disciples were still held in the waves of this mortal life, they were laboring on the sea. But since our Redeemer had already passed beyond his perishable body, after his resurrection he stood on the shore.” *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

This entire episode can be seen as a prophecy of the life and work of the Church following the ascension to glory of our Lord. Explain.

Closing Prayer

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God is merciful.
The Lord preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.
Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
For You have delivered my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from falling.
I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
I believed, therefore I spoke,
“I am greatly afflicted.”
I said in my haste,
“All men *are* liars.”
What shall I render to the LORD
For all His benefits toward me?
I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people.

Psalm 116.5-14

Psalm 116.4-14 (*Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)
I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”

The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –
I rest in Him forever!

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,
And dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love
And pay my vows most truly.

3 Breakfast Recall

Read and meditate on John 21.12-14.

Jesus continues to pack this time with His disciples with cues and reminiscences, to remind them of His time with them, and of their calling.

¹²Jesus said to them, “Come eat, because your breakfast is prepared.” None asked Him, “Who are You?” – because, as everybody knew, it was the Lord. ¹³Then Jesus gave them bread and fish. ¹⁴Since He had risen from the dead, this was the third time Jesus came to be with His disciples.

- John 21.12-14

Reflect

1. As far as we know, what was the last meal these disciples had taken together (Jn. 13)? What was Jesus' role in the meal? How was Jesus reminding them of this here, and why? Complete this prayer: *Lord, as You serve and care for us, so we...*
2. What do you make of the disciples' reticence here? Why, since they all knew Who this was, weren't they more animated and eager to talk with Jesus? What does this suggest about their state of mind at this time? What does it suggest about Jesus' attitude toward them in their reticence? *Sometimes, Lord, I feel a bit hesitant about my relationship with You, and then I...*
3. Jesus gave His disciples bread and fish. Do you suppose He did this to cue up anything from their experience with Him? Why? *Lord, fill my life with reminders of Your greatness, goodness, and power, and I will...*
4. John makes a point of telling us that this is the *third time* Jesus had showed Himself to His disciples, alive from the dead. And yet they all seem so tentative, so unsure, either of Him, or of themselves. Why? What did they lack, that would give them the confidence, boldness, and enthusiasm their calling would require? Can we as Christians do *anything* worthwhile apart from this? Explain. *Thank You, Lord, that what You call me to do, You make it possible for me to accomplish because...*
5. As we've seen, Jesus used this situation to recall to the minds of His disciples many situations and episodes from their past experience with Him. Each disciple would have remembered those situations a bit differently, but Jesus was trying to make a general impression on them. To what end? To say what about Himself? And to say what about them? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

“They knew that it was the Lord,’ and therefore they did not ask him, ‘Who are you?’ But seeing that his form was altered and full of awe, they were greatly amazed and wanted to ask something

about it. But fear, and their knowledge that he was not someone else but the same person, checked the inquiry, and they only ate what he created for them by exercising greater power than before. For here he no longer looks to heaven, nor does he perform those human acts he did before, thereby showing that those things that he did previously were done by way of condescension.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Do you think it’s a good idea to create memories, or memorials (photos, written accounts, paintings, etc.) of significant moments in your walk with the Lord? Why might this be a good idea?

Closing Prayer

But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!
Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious *life* from the power of the dog.
Save Me from the lion’s mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!
You have answered Me.
I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Psalm 22.19-23

Psalm 22.23 (Darwall: Rejoice, the Lord is King)

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

4 Simon? Or Peter?

Read and meditate on John 21.15-18.

This confrontation between Jesus and Peter is one of the most dramatic and most important episodes in John's gospel. Jesus' questions are questions we should ask ourselves every day. And His instructions to Peter guide us into our proper calling in life.

¹⁵So then, after He
and they had finished with the fish and bread,
to Simon Peter Jesus spoke, and said,
“Now Simon, son of Jonah, do you love
me more than these?” He answered, “Lord, I love
You, and You know I do.” “Then feed My lambs,”
He said. ¹⁶Then Jesus said again to him,
“Now Simon, son of Jonah, do you love
Me?” “Lord,” he answered, “Yes, You know I love
You.” “Tend My sheep,” said Jesus to him. ¹⁷Then
a third time Jesus asked him, “Simon, son
of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter then
was grieved at this, because He said to him
the third time, “Do you love Me?” So then he
replied, “You know all things, Lord, and of me
You know I love You.” Jesus said to him,
“Then feed my sheep.”

- John 21.15-18

Reflect

1. We need to look carefully at this confrontation, because it speaks to us as much as it did to Peter. First, how did John refer to Peter, and how did Jesus refer to Him? Jesus had been calling him Peter for three years. Now He reverted to calling him by his given name – three times! Why? What was Jesus trying to stimulate in Peter's thinking and soul? Complete the following prayer: *Let me always remember, Lord, what You saved me from, but keep me from ever...*
2. To what was Jesus referring by the word, “these”? What was He asking Peter? If He were to ask you that question, to what would “these” refer? *Lord Jesus, You know I love You, but sometimes I let other things become more important, and then...*
3. There are consequences involved with affirming love for Jesus. What were they in Peter's case? What did that involve? Do all Christians have this responsibility, at least to some degree (Matt. 28.18-20)? How does this work out in your experience as one who loves Jesus? *You have appointed me as a shepherd to those who know You, Lord, and today this will require me to...*
4. Twice Jesus asked Peter, “Do you *love* Me?” He used the same verb these two times, which refers to a deep and selfless love, such as God has for His world (Jn. 3.16). Then, the third time, Jesus

switched to a less demanding form of love, and asked Peter, in effect, “Do you *love* Me like a friend?” While the verb here does mean *to love*, it’s a bit of a step down as far as commitment is concerned. Why did Jesus change to this verb? What He trying to shame Peter or encourage him? Explain. *Lord, even when my love for You is feeble and faltering, still I know that...*

5. Peter was “grieved” to be asked the same question three times. The word means, “to be sad as the result of what has happened or what one has done – to be sad, to be distressed” (Louw & Nida). Why did Jesus ask this question three times? Why did Peter find it *distressing* that He did? Was it important he feel this way? Explain. Should we be reluctant, when necessary, to press a matter with someone, even though it makes them sad or distressed? Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“O pastors! Imitate that diligent pastor, the chief of the whole flock, who cared so greatly for his flock. He brought near those who were far away. He brought back the wanderers. He visited the sick. He strengthened the weak. He bound up the broken. He guarded those who were well fed. He gave himself up for the sake of the sheep. He chose and instructed excellent leaders, and committed the sheep into their hands and gave them authority over all his flock. For he said to Simon Cephas, ‘Feed my sheep and my lambs and my ewes.’ So Simon fed his sheep and fulfilled his calling and handed over the flock to you and departed. And so you also must feed and guide them well.”

Aphrahat (270-350 AD)

If we do not love our Good Shepherd, we will not love or care for His sheep. If we profess truly to love Him, then we must seek the best ways to love and care for those He loves and cares for as well. Would you describe yourself as a true shepherd in the Lord’s flock? Why or why not?

Closing Prayer

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness’ sake, O LORD.
Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Psalm 25.4-10

Psalm 25.4-10 (*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

Make me to know Your ways, teach me Your paths, O Lord!
My Savior, all day long I wait and seek You in Your Word.

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day;
According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Upright and good are You, You lead us in Your way;
The humble You instruct in truth and guide him day by day.

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

5 Follow Me!

Read and meditate on John 21.18-22.

What Jesus said to Peter, He says to each of us.

¹⁸“I tell you, Peter, when you were much younger, you would dress and go wherever you desired. When you are old, however, you will stretch your hands out, and another will take hold and make you stand where you would not.”¹⁹And this, to signify the way that he in death would glorify the Lord, He spoke, and then said, “Follow Me.”
²⁰Then Peter turned around, and chanced to see him following whom Jesus loved, the man who leaned upon His breast at supper, and inquired, “Who, Lord, betrays You?”²¹Peter, when he saw him, asked, “And what about this man, Lord?”²²Jesus said to him, “If I intend him to remain until I come again, well, what is that to you? I say again, you follow Me.”

- John 21.18-22

Reflect

1. Jesus explained to Peter that what he feared on the night he betrayed Him, would ultimately come to pass: Following Jesus would cost him his life. In what sense is this true for us as well? Complete this prayer: Take my life, Lord, and let it be...
2. Early Church tradition tells us that, after a long and fruitful ministry of feeding and tending Jesus' sheep, Peter was crucified upside-down because of his faith in Jesus. Do you suppose he often thought about what Jesus told him there by the Sea of Tiberius? How do you suppose he prepared himself for this? How should we prepare ourselves for the tribulations Jesus promised (Jn. 16.33)? Help me to keep focused on You, Lord, and on Your promises, so that when trials come, I...
3. Despite the cost, Jesus commanded Peter to follow Him. What does it mean to follow Jesus? How can we know where Jesus is leading? What does it mean to follow Him as we go out each day into our Personal Mission Field? Show me the way to follow You, Lord, and I will...
4. Peter saw John following them as they talked, and he asked Jesus about John's fate. What would become of him? Why did Jesus respond the way He did? What was He saying to Peter? What is He saying to us? Lord, help me to be content with knowing Your will for my life, and...
5. While Jesus' will for all His disciples is the same – “Follow Me!” – the shape that takes will be different for each person. We cannot presume to know how Jesus is leading someone else, or what

that person's calling might be. But does this mean we can't encourage one another in following Jesus, or hold one another accountable for following Him? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

There are two states of life, therefore, preached and commended as revealed to the church from heaven: the one being in faith, the other in sight; one remaining in time in a foreign land, the other residing in the eternal heavenly dwelling.... The first was signified by the apostle Peter, the other by John.... And so, it is said to Peter, 'Follow me' by imitating me in the endurance of temporal evils. [But of John it is said], 'Let him remain' till I come to restore everlasting bliss. And this may be expressed more clearly in this way: Let action that is perfected, informed by the example of my passion, follow me; but let contemplation that has only just begun remain until I come, to be perfected when I come. For the godly fullness of patience, reaching forward even unto death, follows Christ; but the fullness of knowledge remains until Christ comes, to be manifested then. For here the evils of this world are endured in the land of the dying, while the good things of the Lord shall be seen in the land of the living. For in saying, 'I want him to remain till I come,' we are not to understand that John was supposed to remain on earth, or to abide permanently, but he was, rather, to wait. Therefore, what is signified by John shall certainly not be fulfilled now, but when Christ comes." Augustine (354-430 AD)

Peter was to follow Jesus and John was to follow Jesus, and we are to follow Jesus. How can believers help one another keep that focus and pursue it diligently?

Closing Prayer

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.

Psalm 33.13-21

Psalm 33.18-22 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

6 True Testimony

Read and meditate on John 21.24, 25.

John ends his narrative with an emphatic statement about its truth, and with an honest admission that he has been selective in what he chose to record, for more could be told than can be told.

²⁴And I, who testify these things, am that disciple. You and I know that the testimony I record here is the truth. ²⁵And Jesus, furthermore, did many other things which are not here recorded, which if they were written, clear and full, well, I suppose the world itself would not be for them a sufficient shelf.

Amen.

- John 21.24, 25

Reflect

1. Let's recall John's purpose for writing this book. Look back at John 20.30, 31. What is it about John's gospel – about the stories and teachings he selected – that makes it especially suitable for that goal? Complete this prayer: *Thank You for this gospel, Lord. Show me how I can use it to help others...*
2. John insists on the truth of what he has recorded. He offers two points to substantiate and validate that claim, one regarding himself, and one regarding "we" (v. 24). He identifies himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Had that been not true, would it have been hard to disprove that claim? If it was true, would others likely have been able to vouch for it? Why did this make John particularly well qualified to write this book? *Jesus, draw me closer to You day by day, so that my witness for You...*
3. To whom was John likely referring by his use of "we" (cf. 1 Jn. 4.5, 6)? Why should we believe them? *O Lord, all the disciples knew You, and all of them lived for You and died for You, because...*
4. Should we include ourselves in John's "we"? Explain. How can "we" have a more credible testimony concerning Jesus? *Give me grace, Lord, to follow You and to live like the disciples did, so that...*
5. Is John exaggerating in verse 25? Meditate on Hebrews 1.3 in your answer. Can we ever run out of reasons to praise Jesus, or to thank and bear witness to Him? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Let us, therefore, pay careful attention to the words, and let us not stop reading and searching them through, for it is from their continual application that we ultimately benefit. We can then cleanse our life so as to cut up the thorns of sin and the cares of the world, which are fruitless and painful. And just as the thorn, however it is held, pricks the holder, so the things of this life, on whatever side

they are grasped, give pain to the one who clings and cherishes them. Spiritual things are not like this. They resemble a pearl in that whichever way you turn it, it delights the eyes.... Let us then lighten ourselves and expand our horizons as we grow in maturity by getting rid of the evil things of this life and practicing the good. Let us obtain everlasting goods, then, through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with whom to the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, dominion and honor, now and forever, world without end. Amen.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

How might you use the gospel of John for the purpose for which he wrote it (Jn. 20.30, 31; 21.24, 25)?

Closing Prayer

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the humble with salvation.
Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment—
This honor have all His saints.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149.4-9

Psalm 149 (Toulon: I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art)

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new!
Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!
Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him
Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre!
To be so praised is God’s one great desire.
Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace;
Show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight!
Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!
Sing praise and take His Word into your hand;
Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

7 Conclusion

Read and meditate on John 21.1-25.

Jesus' appearance to His disciples by the sea set the stage for the next act in redemption's unfolding story.

¹Now after these things, Jesus showed Himself beside the sea to His disciples. Here is how it went:
²When Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), and two disciples more had gathered, ³then said Peter, "I am going fishing." And they all said, "We are going also." So immediately, they went out in the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴When the day came, Jesus stood there on shore, but they did not know it was He. ⁵He called out to them, "Children, have you landed any food?" They answered, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Now cast your net out on the right, and then at last you will catch fish." And so they did, and then they caught so great a multitude, that when they tried to draw the net in, they could not. ⁷Thus, when he saw the many fish they caught, the one whom Jesus loved to Peter said, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he put his garment on (he had removed it), and abruptly plunged into the sea. ⁸Meanwhile, the rest came in the little boat (they were not from the land so far away), and dragged with them the haul of fish which they had caught. ⁹And when they all arrived on shore, a fire was burning, laid on it were fish, and bread. ¹⁰Then Jesus said, "Bring here some of the fish which you have caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter dragged the net, all taut and full of fish (153, to be exact) to land – it might have seemed the net should have been broken, but it was not. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come eat, because your breakfast is prepared." None asked Him, "Who are You?" – because, as everybody knew, it was the Lord. ¹³Then Jesus gave them bread and fish. ¹⁴Since He had risen from the dead, this was the third time Jesus came to be with His disciples.

¹⁵So then, after He and they had finished with the fish and bread,

*to Simon Peter Jesus spoke, and said,
“Now Simon, son of Jonah, do you love
me more than these?” He answered, “Lord, I love
You, and You know I do.” “Then feed My lambs,”
He said. ¹⁶Then Jesus said again to him,
“Now Simon, son of Jonah, do you love
Me?” “Lord,” he answered, “Yes, You know I love
You.” “Tend My sheep,” said Jesus to him. ¹⁷Then
a third time Jesus asked him, “Simon, son
of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter then
was grieved at this, because He said to him
the third time, “Do you love Me?” So then he
replied, “You know all things, Lord, and of me
You know, I love You.” Jesus said to him,
“Then feed my sheep. ¹⁸I tell you, Peter, when
you were much younger, you would dress and go
wherever you desired. When you are old,
however, you will stretch your hands out, and
another will take hold and make you stand
where you would not.” ¹⁹And this, to signify
the way that he in death would glorify
the Lord, He spoke, and then said, “Follow Me.”
²⁰Then Peter turned around, and chanced to see
him following whom Jesus loved, the man
who leaned upon His breast at supper, and
inquired, “Who, Lord, betrays You?” ²¹Peter, when
he saw him, asked, “And what about this man,
Lord?” ²²Jesus said to him, “If I intend
him to remain until I come again,
well, what is that to you? I say again,
you follow Me.” ²³And so this saying went
among the brethren: this disciple would
not die. Yet Jesus did not say he would
not die; He said, “If I intend him to
remain until I come again, to you
this matters not.”*

*²⁴And I, who testify
these things, am that disciple. You and I
know that the testimony I record
here is the truth. ²⁵And Jesus, furthermore,
did many other things which are not here
recorded, which if they were written, clear
and full, well, I suppose the world itself
would not be for them a sufficient shelf.*

Amen.

- John 21.1-25

Reflect

1. Why were these post-resurrection appearances important? What did the disciples learn from them? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, though I have not seen You like Your disciples did, still I...*
2. This particular appearance was important for four of the seven disciples: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, and John. Explain. *Thank You, Lord, that in the way You dealt with and cared for Your disciples, I can see...*
3. Two metaphors crucial to the Church's existence in the world are employed by Jesus in this chapter: fishing and shepherding. What does the Lord intend for us in each of these? *You have sent us to fish for men, Lord, and called us to care for Your sheep. Today, I will...*
4. The revelation to Peter of his manner of death reminds us that the road ahead can be difficult at times. How can Christians prepare to overcome and keep advancing amid the promised tribulations of this world (Jn. 16.33)? *Lord, please do not allow tribulation to discourage me, but when it comes, help me...*
5. Finally, John reminds us that he has given us only a very selective portrait of Jesus in his gospel. It's a good and important one, but not as much as we need. How would you counsel a new believer to continue growing in his vision of Christ, understanding of His work, and sense of His presence? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“And here we conclude ... this commentary on the harp of the Spirit, on the heavenly theologian and Apostle who is the friend of the glory of the Lord, the holy John the younger.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

What are the most important lessons for you from this study of the gospel of John?

Closing Prayer

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD’s,
And He rules over the nations.
All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;

All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done this.

Psalm 22.23-31

Psalm 22.29-31 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

All the prosp'rous of the earth shall before His mercy fall;
Bending low before His worth, hear them humbly on Him call.
Even those low in the grave He will by His mercy save.

Let the generations all witness to His saving grace;
Let them to all nations call, "Bow before His holy face!"
Let the children of the earth hear of Jesus' saving worth!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What was significant about this particular manifestation of Jesus to His disciples?
2. Disciples are both fishers and shepherds, but at all times they are followers. Explain.
3. We all need daily restoration like Peter did. How can we obtain this?
4. Why is the gospel of John important to you?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 21.1-25? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

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Thank you.