



Sermon Transcription • John 21:15-19 (NIV)

Restoration

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[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

You don't actually have to be around the church much or to have spent much time in your background to know the name "Peter". You might know Peter is Saint Peter's Basilica or whatever, but you do know that Peter is a Christian name. And it's a Christian name because he was one of the disciples and he wasn't just one of the disciples, he was maybe the most famous or infamous disciples. I say "infamous" because Peter was...I don't know, he had foot mouth disease, right? He just...frequently speak out in ways that others would not. And his story is quite remarkable as you trace it through the gospels. So here it is, here's his story in, you know, from 30,000 feet.

He met Jesus the first time when he was out in his boat, in fact. He was a fisherman on the sea of Galilee which is a big lake in the middle of Israel. So he was out on his boat and he spent a good night fishing, had not gotten anything to come that evening, which was of course a big disappointment to him and to the people that he was with. They were about to come back into the shore, and well he found on the shore of the Sea of Galilea, Jesus who was teaching there. And Jesus...the crowds around Jesus were so huge that they would actually, when they would get them all together on a beach, they would...people would want to touch him, they would want to be near him, and so they would press him. So that he was actually stepping into the lake at this point. And so Jesus took the opportunity to turn around and noticed a couple of boats there, just happen to be Peter's boat. And he said, "Can I get in your boat? And we'll set out a little bit from shore so I can teach from off the shore and I can teach the people." So Peter obliged said, "Sure." I'm sure he heard about him, everybody had heard about Jesus at that point. He was healing people and doing remarkable things. Also people had a lot of big things to say about this Jesus. So probably an honour for Peter to have him in his boat. Set out, he teaches, finishes his talk, he turns around to Peter and he says, "Hey why don't we go back out deeper in the water and we'll see if we can catch some fish?" And Peter's thinking, <chuckles> "Yeah. I've been out there all night man, we didn't catch anything." But Jesus is "Ah.. let's... let's try again!" Of course Peter's like, "Oh...thank you.. carpenter... That's great. Appreciate the advice...uh... But.. Okay. I'll oblige you." He heard him speaking, guy who heals and stuff like that. So they turned around and they go out for a little while. And Peter...you know, I'm sure was.. you know patronizing in his smile, "Look.. I'm putting the net over this side. [pretends to toss a net] Look, nothing's coming up." But while he was thinking nothing was coming up, all of a sudden the fish started to jump into the net, like somebody had, like there was a big volunteer party for the fish to get into the net. And some were missing the net, they were jumping into the boat. This guy, Peter,



starts to call the other boats together and they had to gather all the fish in. So much so they had to put it in different boats. And somewhere in the middle of that chaos, Peter realizes that this Jesus is a different kind of dude. I mean, even the fish of the sea obey him!

So Peter in the midst of this, puts together the teaching and the presence of Jesus, and this miracle, and he casts himself before Jesus' feet and said, "Depart from me!" Like, "I'm not worthy to be in your presence." I always pictured Jesus putting his hand on Peter in that moment and he says, "Ah... Don't worry about it...But from now on we're gonna go fishing men." And they do, they come back into the shore and Peter leaves behind everything, leaves behind his family, leaves behind his boat, he leaves behind his business and he follows Jesus as do many others. Twelve in fact. Guys who were picked up sometimes from tax collector booths, sometimes from the side of the road, sometimes they're brothers of people who already come...But 12 guys decide they're gonna follow this Jesus around all over the place. And this rag tag group ends up having a spokesman, they didn't elect him, but Peter...like I said, he just likes to volunteer information. You know people like this in your life, right? They're the people in the meetings who ask all the awkward questions, and then you're like, "...Ooh that's awkward...[fiddles fingers] but I'm very happy you asked it cause I was thinking it myself!" That's Peter.

So it wouldn't surprise you that later on when Jesus starts announcing to the people that he's gonna be going to Jerusalem where he is going to die at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, and then three days later he's gonna rise again. That's his prediction. Won't surprise you that Peter pulls the guy aside at one point, because here's the way it's supposed to work: the Messiah, that's the word that means the Deliverer, was promised for ages past, he was gonna come, he was gonna deliver Israel, prophecy said he was gonna deliver Israel from their oppression, and at that moment, the oppression was at the hands of the Romans. So the rule was, the Deliverer comes and *delivers*...from the Romans. The Deliverer doesn't come and *die*... at the hands of the Romans. "Jesus, have you not read the Messiah Magazine here? I mean, like, this is...what's supposed to happen?" And so Peter of course, pulls him aside after he's been announcing all this stuff. Peter pulled Jesus, "Come over here for a minute.... I don't know if you understand the rules of Messiahship like I do, but I...I just need to inform you that you need to go and deliver us from the Romans. That's why we're all on board with this, right? We're gonna take over by force if necessary, the whole government, and that's why you're here, right? You know that right? So.. maybe you should go back out and announce to the people that all this talk of dying at their hands was all just...rhetorical flourish, we can do a little PR, I don't know, spin this one way or another... Just fix it, Jesus." Of course Jesus responds by saying, "Get behind me, Satan! Don't be talking like the devil now! You are only honouring the things of men and not the things of God."

The time continues on and Peter ends up getting more and more verbose, more and more bold in his declaration about how when this time of Jesus' suffering comes. When the Romans and the Jews come to get him, Peter's gonna be the one who sticks by him. Jesus, again, predicts, "Listen, you all, all of you disciples are gonna fall away. All of you are gonna walk away from me and leave me exposed and alone. All of you."



Peter says, “Noo... Not all of us. I mean, I’ve been with these guys for the last few years, so I can imagine some of us, like all of them [pointing to the back]... but not me. Cause I’m the cream of the crop Jesus, when it comes to the following thing. So I wanna go with you ‘til death.”

Jesus says, “You know what. Let me tell you something Peter, that you’re gonna deny me three times and a rooster’s gonna crow.”

“Nooooooo... way. Never. it’ll never happen. I’ll bet you.”

Eventually Jesus gets arrested. There’s this great scene where Peter, they’re in the Garden of Gethsemane and, the officials have come to arrest Jesus, you know Judas pushed a kiss on him. The officials come and they arrest Jesus, and they say “Who are you?” And he says, “I am.” And it’s the name of God. And they all fall down, and Peter pulls out his sword while they’re on the ground. <yells> And he chops the ear off, right? Brave Peter, “You’re on the ground there, <whack whack>”.

Sorry...Jesus says, “Put your sword away.” Heals the guy’s ear. Peter runs away with the other disciples, Jesus goes and he goes to a trial and he is in an upper room where there’s this trial going on. And below, Peter have followed at a distance, you know, far enough away so they wouldn’t know that he was part of the gang, and there he is, kind of standing—it was cold that night, so he’s standing around the fire, and there’s a few other people there, and this little girl standing next to him while Jesus is being asked questions in this upper room. And Jesus is being faithful to answer those questions truthfully, Peter’s down below, and he’s...warming himself by the fire. And this little girl says, “Aren’t you one of those guys...who was with him?”

“No, no, no, no...Listen, I have a face...that looks like lots of people...I get this all the time. But this time it wasn’t me.”

“Alright...”

Couple minutes later, a couple of other guys show up by the fire and they’re looking and telling Peter, “No, no, no, wait a minute. I think we saw you with the group that was around... Aren’t you one of his disciples? You were with that group that was with him?”

“No! Like I told this little girl. No! That’s not the case, I was *not* with him.”

“No! Wait a minute!” Says another guy, “My cousin Joe, just lost his ear to some dude and you looking an awful lot like the guy who was wielding that sword! I would not forget somebody like that, so you’re that guy! You’re that guy!”

“I am not. That. Man!” Cue the rooster.

I mean, he’s a failure. He disappears into the darkness, Jesus was right. You can imagine what it would be like to be Peter at that point. Like, overwhelmed with grief and failure and wondering if there was any future he goes into hiding with all the others, thinking that they too might get arrested and crucified when Jesus was crucified, and so... You can imagine their immense surprise on Sunday morning when the two ladies who were with them went to the tomb and came running back saying, “Hey when we got there, there was no stone, there were no guards, and there was no Jesus!” Peter takes off running right, takes off, actually John’s gospel describes it, Peter took off running then John started later and passed him by, you know—“cause I’m faster...” says John. Right? And he gets there first. And then Peter peeks in after him, and sees that this is the case.



A little bit later Jesus appears to them in this upper room. And even later than that he appears to them one more time on the Sea of Galilee, where it all began. Peter's out in a boat...again. And he's fishing...again. And he can't catch anything...again. And a figure appears on the beach and says <shouting like from the distance> "Hey! Can you put out the nets on the other side?" And Peter's like, "Yeah... this happens to me all the time, right? Okay fine.. I'll put it on the other side..." And the fish started jumping in, and John who's in the boat says, "Oh!! It's the Lord!" And Peter's like, "No it's the Lord! I'm not an idiot!" Then he puts on his clothes, not an idiot, puts on his robe and jumps in the water and starts swimming, right? That. So actually the scripture say while Peter's swimming, the others rode back, which I always think it'll be a great picture of Peter's freaking out [swimming], and they're swinging by "Hey keep going, Peter, that's great!" [rowing] <audience laughs> But eventually they end up on the shore, and there was Peter dripping wet, and smiling excited. And Jesus has a fire, "Come on have breakfast!" He says, "Let's have some fish. And you join us!" They're around the fire, and...Jesus is looking at Peter and he said, "Peter I want to talk to you about something." What do you think he says?

What do you think that God wants to say to people who have failed him? But whom he wants to restore. Like if he could get you around that fire, and you were sitting there, what would he say to you? What would he say to me? If you want to be restored to God, if the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ made restoration with God possible, but there are some conditions for that restoration to happen. What are they? This passage John 21:15-19 describes them. Here they are, the conditions for restoration with the resurrected Christ, restoration requires:

1. Recognition of failure
2. Reorientation to the family
3. Recommitment to following

I want to use those kind of as our guide as we walk through this passage together.

[Restoration Requires Recognition of Failure]

So here's the first of those, restoration requires a recognition of failure. Look at verse 15, they're sitting around their fireplace or the little fire there, and there they are staring at each other and Jesus wants to start a conversation here's what happened, John 21:15-22,

"When they had finished eating [fish in their teeth, you know?], 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.'

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.'

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.'"

It's an interesting little scene, a little dialogue right? I mean it starts Jesus looking in his eyes, "Peter I want to talk to you about something."

"Yeah, what is it?"

"Do you love me more than these?"

"Uh... these who? These what?" "

These, Peter! Do you remember the conversation that we had Peter, way back when... you were talking about how, everybody else will fall away...but I never will, cause they're a bunch of losers and I'm pre—remember that? Do you remember that? So do you love me more than these? Given all that's happened in the recent past, how true to your word have you been, Peter?"

Peter doesn't catch on immediately so he says, "Yeah! You know I love you more than these."

"Okay, let me ask you again, do you love me?"

"Yes, I just answered that for the second time!"

"But do you love me?" The third time,

"Yeah—" You can imagine Peter, halfway through the sentence, "Yea—Oh...<pause> Fire...Three questions...love me more than these...Oh..."

You can imagine why he's sad. Why is he sad? What's Jesus doing here? Well the answer is he's doing largely the same thing that my sister used to do to my dog Paddy when we were little kids. My dog Paddy was a really lovely black retriever, but would pee on the carpet a lot. And so my sister would drag Paddy and drag that dog in, and shove her nose in it and say, "Look what you did! Look at this horrible thing that you did!" And the dog will be like "What is it? I don't know...what you're doing here, right? This smells awful, get my nose out of it." You know? And I know I've talked to people these days who say, "Well that's not the way you train dogs, cause it's mean." Yeah it is kind of mean, but isn't this kind of what Jesus is doing here? "Hey Peter, let's revisit the recent past where you completely failed me I want to do it in detail and around kind of a symbolism. That's why I made the fire." In other words, we can't start again Peter, unless you recognize the failure of what's just gone by.

Restoration requires a recognition of failure. I think that's the case in every relationship that you and I have. It's not just with God, it certainly is with God, but it's in your marriage and it's in your businesses. And the way you start again is you recognize where you'd gone wrong in the past. The problem that we have and the reason we don't do it very often is because we don't like accepting blame for things. I don't know about you, but I do my best at shifting blame away. You know why? Cause I'm human. And I have—I'll argue from the Bible on that one. I'm human, I'm in the line of Adam and Eve who were really good at shifting blame. You say, really? Yeah, okay. Genesis 3, so God makes Adam and he makes Eve, and then... you know they're naked and happy. And then the serpent comes along and says, "No...did God really say...and you should eat..." And Eve's like, "Wooo... that's awesome." And Adam's like "Okay, fine..." And so they taken it, and their eyes are opened, and



they hide. The first sin in the history of the world, and they hide and this is how Genesis describes it, Genesis 3:8-13,

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. [Isn't that a great scene, by the way? Hey let's stand behind this tree [pretend to hide behind a tree], he won't see us. The Almighty, all knowing God will not see me behind this tree. Right? Sin always makes you stupid, right? It's just...it does.] But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” [By the way, it's not a question where he's trying to seek some information, that's what I say to my kid sometimes, 'Where are you?' Cause I know what they did. **“Where are you?”**] He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The *woman* [Words by the way, gentlemen, that have been repeated throughout history over and over again, “The woman! <growls> [clench fist] That woman! She smelled so good... and she looks so good... How am I supposed to say no to that thing? Right? I mean, are you kidding me? She's the problem? And if she's not the problem you're the problem [points up to God], cause you put her here with me! Not my fault...” **The woman**] you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, ‘The serpent [Slimy beast! That serpent did it. It's funny actually God eventually gets the serpent and he's like “Yeah okay. I did it. Yeah you're right.” Right? **The serpent**] deceived me, and I ate.’”

There's no... So the only ones in the story who actually shift the blame are the people! Cause you know why? Cause that's what it means to be fallen human beings. We like to shift blames. We're really good at it. When I was a little kid, I had an imaginary friend named John. Shared this before with a few people, but I remember stealing gum from a grocery store called 'Albertsons' in the Bellevue area, the eastside of Seattle. I remember where I was when I stole it, and I remember where I was when I was chewing it and my mother saw me chewing it, I was on the stair of our house. I was like, <chewing noises> chewing away on the gum. And she came to me and said, “Where did you get the gum?” Cause you know, we didn't...I wasn't allowed gum. She said, “Jeff, Jeff. Where did you get the gum?” <chewing noise> “John...” Right? “John gave it to me.” <chewing away> “Really? Where did he get it?” “He stole it from the store.” Right? <audience laughs> John!!! I remember I was really angry at my parents one time, this is a story that still goes around in my family. I was really angry at my parents one time, I don't know why, but I, you know, when you're a little kid you're like, “Ooh... I hope I go blind so they'll be sorry!” or whatever. So I went upstairs and there's a big toy box you know, and I squeezed myself into...this must've been I was like five or six, I don't know, or sixteen or... anyways, so...I squeezed myself in this toy box and I started wailing. <wails> And my parents came up the stairs and they stood at the door, I still remember them standing there laughing at me, and they said, “What happened?” And I said, “*John* pushed me in this toy box!” Right? It's John's fault! It's always John's fault. That thing that I did? Not me. It was John. He's the wicked one, he's the terrible one. Why did I do that? Cause I'm human. Because I'm a fallen human being. And one of the ways that the



fallenness in my human being-ness shows up is that I shift blame from me to anybody else I can possibly put it on. But I'm telling you, that my relationship with God and your relationship with God will go nowhere unless you're willing to admit...your blame.

There's a story that Jesus tells in fact of a Pharisee and a tax collector. The tax collector who stands at a distance from the temple where they go and worship. And the tax collector is bad guys in those days right? And essentially they were capitulators with the Romans and nobody liked them, they were the wicked people. And this guy walks, and everybody knows it, everybody tells him everyday that he is wicked and wrong, and he walks to the temple and before, he won't even lift his head to heaven and he just says, "oh God... have mercy on me, a sinner." while he pounds his chest. Meanwhile, a Pharisee, you know a Pastor of the most religious person of the day, you know, good guy. Races past him, boldly goes up to the temple boom, throws open the doors, <loud voice> "I'm thankful God!" as he bellows to heaven, "I'm thankful God that I give the right amount and I am the right amount and I know the right amount of people and...I'm especially thankful that I'm not like that dirt bag back there." </voice> And Jesus says, "Look, it's the tax collector and not the Pharisee who goes home justified that day." Why? Because God opposes the proud and he gives grace to the humble. So if you want to begin again with God, there is one prerequisite, it's humility. It's just the willingness to acknowledge that you don't have it together. And I don't know if this is a secret to you, but you don't have it together. Restoration requires recognition of failure.

[Reorientation to the Family]

Here's the second one then, restoration requires a reorientation to the family. So, I want to read that same passage to you, verses 15-17, just point out something that I didn't point out before. So here's the passage again, John 21:15-17,

"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."

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."

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."

So I want you to imagine that you're sitting in a room together with maybe, a community group, right? We're gonna talk about this passage together. And I want you to look at the passage, like a good Bible study, I want you to look at the passage and I want you to answer my Bible study questions, here it is. Alright? You got your little cup of coffee, your tea, and you got your little muffin there and Bibles open in front of you...Here's my question: What are the *imperatives* in this passage? What are



the *commands* in this passage? See you have questions in the passage, didn't ask for the questions, you have an answer to the question in the passage, and then you have *imperatives*, and there are three repeated imperatives. Cause the way that the passage is structured is, Jesus says "Do you love me?" Peter says "Yes, I love you." And Jesus comes back with "Feed my sheep." There it is. The command: feed my sheep. Tend to my lambs, feed my lambs. Why does he add this? Why not just leave it? "Do you love me?" "Yes." "You love me?" "Yes." "Do you love me?" "Yes." Instead he adds this piece. And it's because Jesus is trying to say, "Listen, you can say that you love me all that you want Peter, but it's gotta show up somewhere. And you know where it's gonna show up? In your commitment to the people of God. If you love God, then you will love the people of God. They are a package deal.

So you find in fact, lots and lots of this. The same point being made by John in some of the letters that John writes, and also earlier on in the gospels. It's like one of John's *main* main point. So, 1 John 2:9-11,

"Anyone [He says, this is a letter that is written to a bunch of churches. **Anyone**] who claims to be in the light [So if you claim to be a Christian] but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness [So you say one thing, and you do another. You say that you love God but you hate your brother and sister, well you don't love God then. You're still in the darkness]. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them."

You see his point? You profess faith in God, if you profess that you love God it's gonna show itself necessarily in the way you treat your brothers and sisters. So, James, also joins this act. James 2:14-16,

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters [So he's addressing the church. **What good is it my brothers and sisters**], if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? [So they're all talk and no action. Is this good faith? To answer the question, he says "Well let's consider an example"] Suppose a brother or a sister [Suppose another Christian] is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?"

At church one day, you see someone in great need, you have the means to meet that need, that person's a Christian, you're a Christian. And you go up to them and instead of giving them the money or helping them out in an actual way in line with your profession, you just pat them on the back and say, "I hope it goes well for you. I'll pray for you." What good is your profession if it doesn't lead to action? Specifically towards your brothers and sisters.



It's a point in fact in John 13 where Jesus gets down on his hands and knees and he's washing the disciples' feet. And they're like, "What are you doing? Why are you doing this? This is the work of a slave!" And Jesus says, John 13:34-25,

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

By what? *If you love one another*. If you want the whole world to know that you're genuine Christians...love one another. That's the mark. This shouldn't be surprising to us by the way. The idea that God, the way that you treat God, is necessarily shown in the way that you treat his family, his kids. Cause imagine I came over to your house this afternoon, Easter, you're gonna have a meal right? You're gonna get I don't know, Easter ham, Easter turkey, Easter hot pockets. I don't know what it is that you're gonna have there. But we're gonna eat together, I like hot pockets, so I'm good with that. So here we are...clearly [points to self]. So anyways, like...I'm there, and we're having our meal together. Your kids are running around, you planted eggs around or maybe you don't believe in that, so you planted like.. Christian crosses around, I don't know, whatever. So anyway, your kids are having a good time, and little noisy. Finished the meal, and I say, "Thank you very much for having me. It was really delightful to spend some time with you."

And you say, "Great! Did you have a good time?"

And I say, "Well... yeah. Except for one thing."

"Really? What?"

"Yeah I don't like your kids." <audience laughs>

"They really bothered me most of the time, they were loud and obnoxious and irritating. So listen, here's the deal, I'm happy to come over and spend time with you cause you guys are amazing. I would love to spend time with you but I would also like you to lock all of those cretins up in a room while I'm here. Is that cool?" Now, Dad, how are you gonna respond to me at this particular moment? There's some dads who be like, "Finally! Somebody said it. There it is. I know." <audience laughs> I'm kidding. Naw! You'd be very angry with me, would you not? You'd be like, "Well here's the thing, Mr. Jeff...If you like me, you're gonna like my kids. We come together as a package deal!" Yeah, God's no different. God's no different. Don't say you love God and then you think that his church is trash. It's not how he feels about 'em.

Healthy Christians are committed to loving their brothers and sisters and local churches. Cyprian of Carthage one of the early church fathers, he said it in a little more pointed way, he said, "He who does not have the church for his mother cannot have God for his father." He who doesn't have the church for his mother cannot have God for his father. And that's a surprise to lots of people these days. They want to fight about that. In fact I was reading an article a little while ago in a magazine called *Charisma Magazine* online. It was talking about some people who want to say that they love God but really can't stand being around other Christians, especially in the local church. And so here's how this article began,



“Lynn loves God, praises His name, studies His Word, serves His people and helps build His kingdom. She just can't be bothered to go to His house anymore. The Spirit-filled believer who spends many of her working days at Christian conferences is more likely to be found slumbering on Sunday mornings—or washing her clothes. “I'm sick of hearing pastors talking for themselves,” she admits candidly. “I don't want to go and hear the same thing I did last week, sing the three fast, the three slow. ... I just don't want to spend 3-1/2 hours at church. I prefer to sleep in, do my laundry or prepare for the next week.”

Lynn is in good company. Thousands like her who by all litmus tests would be gauged as devout, even zealous, Christians are voting with their feet and becoming ‘stayaway saints.’ “It's not like I'm backsliding,” she cautions, describing her daily commute prayer-and-praise sessions in her car. ‘Only people with a religious spirit who think you have to be ‘in church’ say that. I just have a hard time with the routine of it. ... It's not fresh.’”

I might surprise to tell you that it might surprise that I actually totally identified with her. I get it. Like, if the goal of my Christian life is for me to be spiritually edified, so that my spiritual tank is filled up, then my tank is gonna be filled up by some really good stuff. It makes sense for me, to go to the buffet of religious choices around, and just pick and choose the ones that I want right? You like this preacher, okay put them on your iPod. You like those songs right? Make a playlist. Put it on your head, go to the top of Sumas mountain and see the sunrise. That's where God is! [pounds pulpit] I get it. My heart is warm so that if the goal of your Christian life is to be a spiritual Thanksgiving turkey, good fattened up one. But I gotta tell you, if you're gonna take Jesus and his words to Peter here seriously, that's not the goal. “Do you love me Peter?” “Yes, I love you! Let's go sit alone together somewhere.” “Not enough. Feed my sheep.” Love your brothers, love your sisters.

I remember riding in a car with a guy, picked him up at the airport, he was speaking at a conference. He's an older gentleman. <chuckles> He kept calling me, <deep voice> “Young man, young man...”</voice> I was a youth pastor, he thought, “Young man...” He said, “Young man, what will you planning to do in the next number of years in ministry?” I'd been a youth pastor for like a year. And I didn't really love the church. The church was... hard. I grew up not around churches, gotten involved in them, it was hard for me. Politicking and struggles, and the hypocrites, and...I said, “Listen, you know what I've worked in the church for a little while really it's been... a good experience but I gotta tell you the truth, I'm not really a ‘church’ kind of Christian.” He said, <deep voice> “Excuse me young man?” I'm driving and I look like “What?” And he said, “Can you say that again?” I said, “I'm not really a church kind of Christian.” <clears throat> “Young man, there are no other kinds. [gives a stern look]” And he's right. I was naive and...foolish and he's right. Look, restoration with God necessarily will lead you to a love for God's family.

[Recommitment to Following]

Here's the last one, restoration requires recommitment to following. So here's verse 18, they're sitting around the fire and Peter hears the “Do you love me, do you love me, do you love me” he's saddened



in his heart, “You know that I love you.” And then Jesus moves forward, “Okay. Now that we’ve established all of that with you, Peter, very truly...” John 21:18-19,

“Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” [“That’s my prophecy,” says Jesus “to you Peter.”] Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me!’”

Do you know the tradition in the church actually is that Peter died by being crucified. In fact, his arms were stretched out in a way he didn’t want. And he was dressed in ways that he didn’t want. But his crucifixion according to tradition didn’t happen in the right way up, it was the other way...it was upside down, by his own request. Because he didn’t see himself as worthy to die the same way his Lord did. So if the tradition is to be trusted, the words of Jesus, the prophecy of Jesus here, comes to fruition. And so here he is, “I’m gonna restore you now Peter, but you need to know that the call that I have for you to follow me is gonna cost you everything. If you come and you follow me, I’m not the copilot, man! I get to run the show and I’m gonna lead you in places sometimes of suffering and difficulty, but that’s the cost.” And that’s the call, and there is no other.

Look, I know that we live in times these days where in the Christian church you hear lots and lots of pastors talk about following Jesus and trying to convince you of it in the same way that they might try to sell you a timeshare. You know the timeshare salespeople, “Hey.. this is a phenomenal timeshare deal you get! All of this space in these wonderful weeks, and blah blah...” they never tell you about any of the details of it. Because getting to the details, there’s blackout dates, and fees, and another fee, and it can go... five years from now, you’re trying to off load it, and you can’t do it. They don’t talk about any of that kind of thing up front, because it’s hard to sell stuff like that if you are honest about it. So some people approach the selling of “Jesus” in the same way that you sell a timeshare. And I’m telling you, Jesus himself doesn’t approach it that way. He doesn’t! He’s really honest in fact. In Luke 14:25, there’s all these crowds that are following him. So Jesus, can you imagine being one of these crowds? “Hey! Jesus we’re on your team! And you’re amazing!! We’re here!!” Big flags and signs that say “Jesus for President!” And then you following him along. Large crowds were travelling with Jesus and turning to the large crowds he said, Luke 14:26-33

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple [What—What? Jesus you, should be giving them the good stuff! You know, the sales pitch! Don’t tell them to hate their parents! And of course he’s using the word ‘hate’ in a different way that you and I might use it. He’s using it and saying, “Listen if I’m not the chief priority in your life, then don’t come]. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to



finish.’ Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? [Do you think they’d be sitting in a war room at some point and thinking to themselves, “You know what... we probably shouldn’t get into this. Cause we don’t have the resources to follow it through.”] If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.”

Man, that’s just not a best life now speech, Jesus. It’s not a timeshare speech. Sometimes you get my—if you spend time around me and all, you see me drinking Coke Zero. I like Coke Zero, right? All the taste, none of the sugar. Zero sugar. I think that a lot of us actually want to have a Jesus Zero. All the blessings, none of the commitment. But there is no such thing. There’s no “lite” version of Christianity. There’s none. There isn’t. I owe you the truth. It’s a go big or go home kind of thing. Disciples when they come, they follow, they leave behind their nets, and they leave behind their families, and they leave behind, they leave behind, they leave behind...and they join Jesus. And what they get in the end is...is Jesus. And he’s magnificent. He’s magnificent. They get resurrection, life. But only if they’re willing to engage in the suffering along the path to get there. They go together. Suffering and resurrection.

I’ll finish with this, Rosaria Butterfield’s a name of a dear woman who...she was a professor at Syracuse University, she’s really very big in the LGBTQ community and was a bit of a champion. But she gotten engaged in a conversation with a local small church pastor in her area in Syracuse and had very cordial lunches and dinners, and eventually she ended up believing in Jesus. And then she converted to Christianity. And she describes what it was like for her and this is what she said in her excellent book *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, she says,

“Although grateful, I did not perceive conversion to be ‘a blessing.’ It was a train wreck. After we profess faith in Christ, the next morning, the alarm still rings and we have to swing our feet out of bed and do something... When I became a Christian, I had to change everything—my life, my friends, my writing, my teaching, my advising, my thoughts. I was tenured in a field that I could no longer work in. I was the faculty advisor to all of the gay and lesbian and feminist groups on campus. I was writing a book that I no longer believed in. And, I was scheduled in a few months to give the incoming address to all of Syracuse University’s graduate students. What in the world would I say to them? The lecture that I had written and planned to deliver—on Queer Theory—I threw in the trash...I was flooded with doubt about my new life in Christ. Was I willing to suffer like Christ? Was I willing to be considered stupid by those who didn’t know Jesus?... And what about my home... What does a Christian home look like, especially one run by a single ex-lesbian with a now defunct PhD?... Conversion put me in a complicated and comprehensive chaos. I sometimes wonder, when I hear other Christians pray for the salvation of the ‘lost,’ if they realize that this comprehensive chaos is the desired end of such prayers. Often, people asked me to describe the ‘lessons’ that I learned from the experience [of coming to faith in Christ]. I can’t. It was too traumatic.”



Right. She's in a long line of faithful people who through the years have had to give up everything to follow. It's an old prayer, a Congolese Christian prayer, that says "Lord, You be the needle and I the thread. You go first, and I will follow wherever You may lead." That's the heart of a true disciple. That's the heart of a true Christian.

Look, there's a reason I chose this particular passage to talk about on Easter. Cause it occurs to me that you and I know a little bit of what it's like to fail God. I don't care who you are. You and I know a little about what it's like to boast about how great we're gonna be, and then...<flats out> we know what it's like to sit around that fire, and sitting Peter's seat. If you've ever wondered what it is that Jesus would say to somebody like you or me or Peter. This is it. It's no mistake that you're here today. It's no mistake in God's timing that you've heard what it is that I have to say here. He is calling you, urging you, welcoming you home. But it has some conditions. Are you willing? For him to be the needle and the thread and you go wherever he leads?

Father, I'm thankful for our grace and for this word. I pray that you'll bless us today with it. Guard and keep our hearts Lord. Would your Spirit do a great work in us as we continue to consider these things. Would you help with the reverberating our minds. Maybe this passage this week, Father, would just kind of be prompted back up, Father, would continue to press on us. The need to follow, and great joys that are ours if we do. But also the great challenges that you'll lead us through by the power of your Spirit. So we thank you now, in Jesus' name, Amen.