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## FEED MY SHEEP

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### Part 34 of The Gospel of John

Pastor Mark Driscoll | John 21:1-26 | September 02, 2001

John 21. We are gonna finish John today. It only took an hour sermon 52 times to do this, and we're done with John, and then we'll start Proverbs here shortly. Get into more practical matters of child rearing and family and sexuality and dating and courtship and all of those other practical matters. We're going to conclude John today, though. If you would, please, start with me in John Chapter 20, Verse 30. We'll revisit what we looked at last week. The setting here is that we've looked at the life, betrayal, death by crucifixion, burial, and resurrection from death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John then concludes his Gospel account in Verse 30, telling us that Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but these, the things that he has written for us, are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing, you may have life in his name. John very succinctly tells us the purpose for the writing of this Gospel account. It is to show us Jesus as God, that we would place our faith in him and receive the gift of eternal life, which is — I've explained to you — is not just that we live forever, but that it is God's life floods us in the present and transforms us and gives us a state of living that then becomes a duration without end. So, up until this point, everything that we have studied and learned and examined and read was for one purpose: seeing Jesus as God.

Putting our faith in him; having faith in him, and receiving life from him by grace. So up until this point, much of what we have studied are things to be believed: who is Jesus? What has he done? How are we to respond? Today, what we get into is — in Chapter 21 — the fact that after we believe, we are not done. There is work to conclude. There is, among some people in Christianity, this false understanding that having faith in Jesus and receiving eternal life is a finish line, and once you cross that, then you've done your duty. Great, now I'm a Christian. Glad I'm done with that. Now I can get on with the rest of my life. That is now how John purposes his Gospel. John tells us, in Chapter 21, I think very subtly, that after we have come to rightly understand and have faith in the Lord Jesus, we have work to do.

That the next 30, 40, 50, 60 years of our life — however many the Lord would give us — are for accomplishing his purposes for participating in his work, and, so, what we receive from him in Chapter 21 is the commissioning of his servants out into the field to do his work, and, so, believing and rightly understanding Jesus is first, foremost, paramount, and primary, but it is not all that there is. There are things to be done, and, so, for some of you, your Christianity — you feel more comfortable in that believing, like to study, and contemplate and come to rigorous theological understanding, and, "Okay, I think I see this. I think I see that," and, for you, a lot of your Christianity is lived in your head. Where John is going to press that is that Christianity needs to move itself from the head into the hands; that there are things to be done.

Now that you understand Jesus, you need to go do these things, and it becomes far more practical and much less about just continuing in our understanding, but then fleshing that out in practical ways of daily living. So that Jesus is more than a concept, but he's living and active and present in the daily affairs of his people. So that's where we find ourselves in Chapter 21. In light of what we believe, what do we do? We're told, afterward, "Jesus appeared again to his disciples by the Sea of Tiberius." According to Matthew, that was the place he'd appointed to rendezvous with them after his resurrection. It happened this way.

"Simon Peter, Thomas, called Didymus," which means "twin", "Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together. '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. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. 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. Then the discipline whom Jesus loved," — that's John, the author of our Gospel — "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. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about 100 yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it and some bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread, gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead."

Here's our setting. Jesus is alive. Comes back from death, and he, before departing and returning into heaven, needs to commission his men into the field to do their work. They have work to do, and it begins, interestingly enough, with a meal. I love the fact that as ministry in the New Testament church really finds its seedling here in Jesus' interaction with his disciples. It begins around hospitality and breakfast. That's how everything begins.

That ours is a religion that really is founded upon hospitality, friendship, and people loving each other and practical ways in the breaking of bread, and it's interesting to note that some people really criticize Peter because here they are waiting for Jesus to rendezvous with him. When will he return? When will he come back? When will we get to meet with him and get our orders for the next phase of our journey?

Some people say, "Well, Peter just went back to his old trade." I don't think so. I think Peter is just killing time. If you're a fisherman, you're stuck on the shore and you have no idea when Jesus is coming, and you're hungry, you go fishing. You know, don't just sit there bored to death day-in and day-out. You go fishing. You go do something. Peter is a guy. Guys can't sit there very long. They have to do things. So Peter decides to go fishing. They see the Lord Jesus on the shore. John the beloved recognizes him. They're about 100 yards out. Peter's so excited. He's very impetuous. Jumps in the water; swims the 100 yards. The boat is filled with 153 fish. I'm sure the guys are very happy that Peter has dropped his oar and decided to go it alone, and then they're having this meal with Jesus on the beach, beautiful setting, breakfast with Christ.

And nobody really begins the conversation. There's sort of this awkward silence, because, well, now, Jesus has died for our sins and rose from death. We don't know really what to say. It's a bit overwhelming. We'll wait for him to break in the conversation. What we see then is that there is a bit of unfinished work at this moment that Jesus needs to conclude with Peter. If you will recall, Peter had been predicted by the Lord Jesus to betray him on three occasions. Peter was a coward and did deny Christ three times, just as was promised.

As Jesus was betrayed and arrested and heading off to the false trial and ultimately his crucifixion, Peter and John were following behind and Peter became afraid that he might find himself encountering the same fate as the Lord Jesus, and, so, when people asked him, "Well, do you follow Jesus? Are you one of his servants?" Peter denied it very soundly. "I don't know him. I've never met him." He was such a coward that he denied him even to a teenage girl, and now Jesus has to finish his work with Peter. He has to reinstate him, and it is good news, because, for each of us in various ways and times, we will deny Christ. We will sin. We will fail. We will walk away. We will disbelieve, but Jesus comes seeking out Peter, and I love the fact that he does so in a public way. He does it in front of the other men.

What that does is that validates and reinstates Peter. Peter will need authority as the leader to disciples and as the leader of the early church to carry on this ministry of the Gospel that Jesus is going to give him, and so Peter needs to be dealt with publicly, because that's the way that leaders are dealt with. When they sin, it is not just a private matter to be dealt with in private, but it is a public matter, and, so, the Lord Jesus deals with his sin in a public way, but he does it not just to crush him. He does it to bring him godly grief and sorrow that leads to repentance that leads to restoration, that then can culminate in fruitfulness. That's what he's doing, and so we find that in Verse 15.

"When they had finished even, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you truly 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 truly 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?'" John then adds, "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.'" And, as Peter denied him three times, Jesus Christ asks him three times, "Do you love me?" This is the heart and the crux of the matter. This is the foundation upon which people's whole life in ministry is to be built: does he love Jesus? That's it. If you had to narrow Christianity down to one thing, this is the question: do you love me? That's Jesus' question, and Peter has to wrestle with this issue very seriously.

Jesus is pressing Peter to recognize the fact that he has deep and abiding love for Christ, and, for Peter, this breaks his heart. Jesus always needs to break his leaders before they are good for anything. Their heart must be broken over their sin, over their folly, over their condition before their Lord, and Peter, here, undergoes brokenness, but this is, for Peter, a breaking that will lead to much fruit and greater health. This is the place where Peter's whole life will transition. He will be transformed from this moment.

He becomes a different man after looking Christ in the eye, and if you can even imagine this that you are the leader of the disciples; that you've been with the Lord Jesus for three years; that he has loved you faithfully; that he has instructed you and fed you and housed you and cared for you and nurtured you and loved you. That at the moment where he was most pained and suffering most grievously, that you fell asleep, rather than praying as he asked, and then, as he was taken off to be crucified, you followed him out of concern, but as soon as a few people asked you if you cared for him, you were worried about your own neck and your own fate, and so you denied him. And a teenage girl was enough to turn you into a coward, and then you saw Jesus die, and you saw him laid in his tomb, but then you saw him rise to forgive your sin.

And he comes to you and he looks you in the eye and he asks you a simple question after cooking breakfast for you. Your God has now just cooked you breakfast. He says, "Do you really love me?" and Peter says, "Yes, I do," and Jesus says, "Do something. Do something." Because Biblically, love is not solely a condition of the heart or a feeling, it is action. God demonstrates his love for us in this. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Love always must demonstrate itself. Peter says, "I love you," then Jesus said, "Then you're going to do things." It's the same thing for a husband and a wife, or a parent and a child. Love does things.

Love is not just, "Well, I love you in here, in this invisible place. I love you here in this visible place with my hands; with my life; with my strength; with what I have. I love you publicly. I love you visibly. I love you practically." Jesus tells him, "If you love me, do something, and it is essentially commanding Peter to do the same thing that the Lord Jesus does. "Feed my sheep." It's a metaphorical way of saying, "Be a pastor and take care of my people. Very simply, that's all he's saying. Teach them Scripture. Love them. Encourage them. Counsel them. Comfort them, whatever it is. Care for them. You care for the ones that I care for. Feed them. Teach them. Nurture them, and, all of a sudden, what Jesus has done for Peter is forever remove the possibility of Peter remaining in his narcissism, in his self-centered focus.

The reason that the Lord Jesus was denied by Peter, was because Peter was not thinking about the Lord Jesus. He was thinking about Peter. Uh-oh, I

might suffer. Uh-oh, I may be inconvenienced. Uh-oh, this might cost me. Peter is now pressed by the Lord Jesus. "If you love me, then think of someone else. Care for someone else. Devote yourself to the needs of others." He takes this focus off of himself, and now it is thrust upon others. That is the essence of loving Christ. The essence of loving Christ is not selfish consumption. Great, my theology is tight. My sins are forgiven. I read my Bible. I pray. I have Christian friends. My life is tidy and in order. Everything is as I need. That's not your goal. Your goal is like Abraham to be blessed for the purposes of being a blessing to all nations of the earth.

Jesus looks at Peter and he says, "Do something. Care for people. Feed them. Be a pastor. If you love me, we're gonna see that. We're gonna see that practically, and we're gonna see that faithfully," and Peter's heart's broken but he receives that. And then, amazingly enough, Jesus tells Peter what this is going to cost him. Jesus tells Peter something that I would guess none of us would want to know, and that is the means of our own death. If you could, would you want to know how you would die? I don't. I don't wanna know how I will die. Peter is told by Jesus, "If you really love me, you're gonna do something, and it's going to cost you." It's like up front he's telling him where this is going and what this is going to require. Verse 18, Chapter 21: "I tell you the truth." Jesus says that continually throughout John.

"When you were younger, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you to where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. It's beautiful that you can glorify God by dying. "Then he said to him, 'Follow me.'" "Here's what's going to happen, Peter. If you love me, you're gonna do things. You're gonna follow me." "Okay, where's that gonna get me? Will I be successful? Will I be rich? Will I be healthy? Will I be happy?" "No, you'll be crucified."

"Oh, well, that's not victorious Christian living. That's painful. That's not Jesus coming to bless my plans and actualize my potential and raise my esteem and meet my needs. That's Jesus using me to bless others and pouring out my life unto death as he did." He says, "You know when you were a young man, you'd dress yourself and go wherever you wanted. When you get older, here's how you're going to die. Someone else is gonna dress you for burial. You're gonna stretch out your hands and be crucified, and they're gonna lead you to a place — the cross — that you do not want to go." We know from history that Peter was crucified, but when they went to crucify him, just as the Lord Jesus predicted, something happened and people recognized that he was not fit to be murdered in the same way as Jesus. So he requested to be hung upside down.

That's how Peter died. Jesus predicted he would die by crucifixion. That's how he died, but he died upside down. This is a moment of great sobriety. You think about it. How many young men here would like to be in ministry of some sort serving God? Okay. How do you like this for a job description? Jesus will rebuke you publicly until you feel really bad, and then he's going to tell you to follow him. You're not allowed to think of yourself. You gotta take care of other people and you will be crucified. Okay, now if we took a show of hands, there would be less hands. We tend to think of service in Christ and ministry as this big, sexy, glorious thing. No, it is not. For Peter, this is not a job description that kids getting out of college line up at the career fair to pursue. Ooh, poverty, martyrdom, wow. I thought I was gonna be an engineer and live in the suburbs.

Well, gosh, I mean, now I'm torn. I just can't figure out what to do with my life. Peter has got a complicated life ahead of him, but he receives it because he loves Jesus. Isn't that the hard part? When you love Jesus, you have to do what he asked you to do, and sometimes it includes suffering. Sometimes it includes trouble. What I like next is there is humor at the end of John's Gospel. You may not all see it. That's probably more a reflection of my personality than God's Word. Proverbs says that "God laughs at us," and of course he does. We go to the mall and we laugh at each other. Just to look at human beings and what they do is — it's funny, and what Jesus' going to do now is he is going to mock Peter, which is important. I'll tell you this.

Ministry is based on this: fellowship, friendship, having meals together; following Jesus; suffering for his cause; and making fun of each other. That — that's the essence of ministry. It is. Who makes fun of you? Who makes fun of you? Friends. You — if someone mocks you, you know they love you. You do. You don't mock complete strangers. It's too dangerous, but you will mock a friend. That's why I make fun of you every week. I love you. So I mock you. I mock you incessantly. Jesus is going to mock Peter. Peter's just had this sober moment, and I love this. I love that, "Okay, Peter, you're gonna die. You're gonna be crucified. Do you love me? Follow me." He's like, "Okay, now he's in. Now I can make fun of him."

And that's important, because you know that your relationships are not healed and restored and back to a place of life unless there's humor and you can make fun of each other and you can live a life with a little bit of folly. That's what Jesus does. I love this. Verse 20 — I hope you think this is funny. If not, entertain me. "Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved," — who's that? It's John. That's the kid brother, John. John loves Jesus. Jesus loves John. These guys are inextricably intertwined. It's a big-brother-little-brother relationship. At the Last Supper, John's there. Jesus loves John. John loves Jesus. So Peter looks over and he's like, "I'm gonna get crucified. What's gonna happen to John?" He's a little jealous. He's a little jealous. If you have kids, you know how this goes. "Okay, I'm gonna spank you now."

"Well, what about them?" "Well, they'll get it later, but that's none of your business." Peter's like, "Okay, I'll get crucified, but what about John? John always seems to get it good. John, he's the spoiled mama's boy in the disciples is what he is. What happens to John?" "Peter turned and saw the disciple who Jesus loved." Little John, probably clean-shaven, mama's boy, you know, one of those guys, sensible shoes. "He was following them. This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the Supper and said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?' When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'" Do you see the irony of that, right? "Okay, I'm gonna get crucified. What about John? Because this stinks, I always screw up life and John always gets it good. I'm rebellious and he's faithful and I'm impetuous and he's patient."

John and Peter are considerably different. Peter takes a sword out of his scabbard and cuts an ear off, you know, and John holds a prayer meeting to restore the man. I mean, it's — they're different guys. They're different guys. Peter's like, "Okay, fine. I'll get crucified. What about John? Is John gonna get crucified? If I'm gonna get crucified, I'm not gonna get crucified alone. This stinks. One of us is — this is not fair. Somebody's gotta get crucified, too. This is not fair." So, Jesus mocks him. "Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is it to you? But you must

follow me.” It’s like, “It’s none of your business. You’re gonna get crucified either way. Don’t worry about John. It’s kind of funny, isn’t it? I mean, really, if you think about it.

“Oh, what— John?” “Who knows, Peter? Who knows? I may let him live forever.” “Great, well that’s awesome. John’s 25 the rest of his life; me, I’m crucified. John may get to live forever, never taste death. He’ll just sing the Sound of Music theme song and skip through his life. That’s great. Me? I’m gonna be crucified.” “It doesn’t matter, Peter. You do what I tell you to do. You follow me.” It’s interesting, isn’t it, how some people get the good job description in the Kingdom and some people don’t? Peter’s definitely got a little tougher. Jesus here — some people took Jesus seriously. This is a problem. Sometimes you can’t take Jesus seriously. Sometimes he’s using irony, sarcasm. He’s mocking. Legalists never see that. They don’t get the funny parts of the Bible; there’s very funny parts. I dare you to read Ezekiel without laughing.

There is crazy, funny stuff in your Bible. It’s all true, but God is a God who uses irony and sarcasm. He does, and he uses it here. “Peter, what if I want John to live forever? None of your business. Follow me.” And, so, what happens here is just like it always happens. Jesus says something that’s irony and sarcasm, and nobody understands it. All the theologians gather, “Hmm, how will he live forever? What does this mean?” Theologians never get the punch line. That’s the problem with most theologians. Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. “Well he said — Jesus said John’s gonna live forever.” No, he was mocking Peter. He was mocking Peter. It’s like when you say, “I’m so hungry, I can eat a horse.” “My gosh, Pastor Mark ate a horse.” No, I didn’t eat a horse.

It looks like it, but he didn’t. That’s irony and sarcasm, but Jesus did not say that he would not die. John says, “I was there. I knew what he was talking about. I got his sense of humor. He only said, ‘If I want him to remain alive, I will return. What is it to you?’ That’s all. It was just a joke. He was mocking Peter, having a little fun at his expense.” Here is the estimate — the — basically the consensus of the New Testament church. It is centered around Jesus: loving him, being intimate in friendship with him. It is following him; suffering for his cause; correcting false teaching; mocking each other; and everything he said having people completely misunderstand him and having to correct. That is the essence of ministry. This disciple who testified to these things and who wrote them down, we know, John says that his testimony is true.

Jesus did many other things, as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. That is not hyperbole and exaggeration. If we were to tease out all of the implications of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, this earth could not contain the volumes to record what that has done, and, so, here, we see another part of ministry. That is sifting through all of the things that could be said about Jesus to focus on those things that are most essential. Do you see all the — basically the seedling’s planted here for the New Testament church: breaking of bread, friendship, love for the Lord Jesus; appointed leadership to shepherd, care, and teach. Little bit of humor.

Sifting through all that should be — can said for that which should be said, and refuting false teaching that misunderstands the Word of Jesus. Here is the seedlings for the New Testament church. Now that we believe, here’s what we’re going to do. What we see, though, is because of this face-to-face encounter with the Lord Jesus and Peter’s restoration, Peter was utterly transformed. He became a completely different man. Up until this point, he was a loud-mouth who bossed Jesus around. He was impetuous, who pulled his sword from his scabbard and cut a man’s hear off. He was very braggadocios, making claims that he could not keep. He was a coward under pressure and buckled, but Peter changed. You think about it. In the next book, in the book of Acts, it tells us about the early church and Peter’s participation in that.

What things do you see Peter doing in Acts, that, if you just read the opening portion of John, you would never guess that that guy Peter, this sort of impetuous, loud-mouthed fisherman would end up going from this blue-collar roughness to a vibrant pastor leading God’s Work in the New Testament. What things do you see in Acts that Peter did that, in retrospect, you go, “That’s surprising that Peter would be like that.” What did he do? He preached to masses of people. He went from a man who — he was scared of the opinion of a teenage girl and denied Christ — to a man who stands up on the day of Pentecost — the feast of Pentecost — and proclaims — steps forward as the leader and proclaims the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; calling people to repent of their sins, to receive eternal life in his name by faith and grace.

He does that and 3,000 people become Christians. That’s a different guy. What else? Yeah. He was responsible for the breaking of the Gospel through Judaism into multiple other nations and cultures. You see this in Acts Chapter 10 with Cornelius. Up until that point, there was — I would strongly argue — a racism among God’s people.

Believing that in order to worship God, you had to participate as a Jew: be circumcised, feasts, festivals, Sabbaths, dietary laws, all of these restrictions, and people from other languages, nations, cultures, tribes, ethnic groups, if they wanted to worship the God of Abraham and Isaac, had to conform to this narrow cultural path, and then God gives Peter a dream in Acts Chapter 10 and basically tells him, “I love all nations of the earth. I have a desire to see all kinds of other people come into relationship with me. You are going to need to change, and your people are going to need to change. My people are going to need to change.”

And God sends him to the home of a man named Cornelius, and Cornelius’ whole household gathers around and Peter teaches the good news of the Lord Jesus and his whole household, basically his kids and his extended family, and maybe his employees and such, all come to faith. And we are all descendants of the legacy of Peter’s proclamation in the household of Cornelius. Most of us are not, by birth, Jews, but we are worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because God worked through Peter in the household of Cornelius, which busted the door wide open, so that people from all nations of the earth could worship the same one, true God. What else surprises you about Peter? Yeah. We see that early on in the book of Acts, God enabled Peter to heal a man through his power — through God’s power.

The Word spreads and the number initially was 120 Christians. Then they choose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot. Peter oversees that. Stands forward; quotes the Old Testament; lays down the process for the selection. The 120 at Pentecost includes 3,000 who are converted. A man, then, is

healed and we are told then that 2,000 people come to faith in Christ as a result of that. The movement is growing. Lots of people are becoming Christians. The religious leaders are upset. They arrest Peter and John, the author of this Gospel we've been studying for the past year. They haul them in and they tell them, "No more preaching about Jesus. We're gonna arrest you. We're gonna persecute you. They're — you're gonna suffer."

Peter's like, "Well I know that. You know, that's not a shock. You can't scare me now. Jesus said I was gonna be crucified, so no matter what I do, I'm gonna get crucified. So, you know, I'm not worried now. There's no way out of God's will." He says, "Well, if we have to obey men or God, we're gonna obey God. So do whatever you want," and they let them go, but this boldness that comes upon Peter, and he does proclaim the Gospel of Christ, his death, burial and resurrection for sin, to the religious leaders who hated him and were opposed to him. Peter believed that no one was beyond the love of God, and that the good news of Christ could soften even the most hardened heart. Peter was different, as a result of seeing Christ face-to-face and recognizing the depth of his love for his Lord. What I love about Peter is Peter though, too, was never perfect. You see Peter sin, right? Later on, Paul says, "I had to confront him face-to-face." It is not that Peter was perfect, but their — as their brother was indicating, there was a humility that came over Peter, recognizing, "When I'm wrong, and I'm confronted, I repent and I change." There is a humility that did, indeed, come over him, and when Paul rebukes him, I'm sure that was, for Peter, a testing of his pride. Here is the leader of leaders. Eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death, burial, resurrection; he was appointed as the leader of leaders.

He was installed as the first pastor to feed God's sheep, and Paul rebukes him and says, "You're out of line. That is not in accordance with God's will. You must change," and Peter receives that. There's a humility that comes over Peter, even in the midst of his folly and his sin and his err, and it's interesting because you look at Peter and you say, "Not impressive," but then by the power of the Gospel and the risen Christ, the thing that transforms Peter's life is the fact the Jesus loves him and he loves him back, and that makes Peter an entirely different man. And God uses him in a way that none of us would've ever fathomed. Some of you are living Peter's legacy. You look at your past and no one would've guessed that you would love God and that God would use you for his glory. It's a shock to all of us. It's a shock to you.

Where Peter goes, is he later on writes as a pastor who's a bit more seasoned. He writes — if you'll go to 1 Peter. I wanna close with two things. He writes with the heart of a pastor who cares for his people. We'll start in Chapter 1, Verse 17 through 21. I want you to see his motive. At this point, Peter is writing to a church that is suffering persecution, as the Lord Jesus did. People he has preached to and seen come to faith are being killed. As a pastor, there is nothing that I can conceive of like seeing people that you teach and love and have led to Christ be killed. I mean, many of you have come to Christ at this church. Many of you have grown in your faith in Christ to this church. To even think that we would have to see some of you killed? That's devastating. That's unbelievable. Peter not only witnessed Jesus' death, Peter witnessed the death of a lot of Jesus' children, and he writes to them in the midst of their suffering. He mentions suffering 16 times in this short letter. He talks about grace and glory. That "By God's grace, through our suffering, we will taste our glory," and he writes to them of those things that are primary and — to give them hope. He begins in Chapter 1, Verse 17. "Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." Peter says, "You know what? This isn't home. If you feel uncomfortable, that's good, and if you feel like you don't belong here, that's a good indication that you are a lover of God." That we should live here in fear — up until his reappointment from the Lord Jesus, Peter lived in fear of men, not of God. He was afraid of suffering. He was afraid of opinion.

He was afraid of rejection. He was afraid of people and their perspectives and conjectures upon him, but when he saw Christ face-to-face, that changed. At that point, all he feared was God, and this is important. He tells his people, "Live in reverent fear of God." It is so easy to allow the opinions of mere men and mere women to govern our conduct and our conscience and our lives. Peter says, "If you're going to fear anything, fear God, and live in reverence to him. This is not your home, so don't unpack and settle in." He then gives them their motive. "For you know that it was not with perishable things, cheap and easy things to get, such as silver or gold, that you redeem from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers."

Do you actually believe that before you received eternal life from the Lord Jesus, that the life that you previously had was empty? It was empty. That's why God's children should never look back like the children of Israel walking out of Egypt talking about the good old days. They're empty. There's nothing there. That's why we've left. That this world is not our home and the life that it offers is empty. We are to be different, aliens and strangers, passing through with the fear of God and a desire to participate in his work, but, instead, he says, "We were purchased with the precious blood of Christ; a lamb without blemish or defect." Remember in John's Gospel? That's how John the Baptizer heralded the coming of Jesus. "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

"He," — the Lord Jesus — "Was chosen before the creation of world." God was thinking about you and I before he had even created this planet for us to dwell on. "But he was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him," — through Jesus — "You believe in God," — that whole issue of faith — "Who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and your hope are in God," — Jesus. He tells them the same thing that John tells them. "Faith in Jesus, participation in his life as strangers and aliens who fear God and recognize that all other life is empty." That is his motive. He deals with his method in 1 Peter 5. I'll close with this. To me, this is of vital importance. Church government is not a particularly sexy issue. You don't see lots of conferences on how to convene governmental orders within church.

You go to the store. You'll see lots of books on how to have a hip band, or how to do skits in drama, or how to market the church as if God were a product. What you will not find is a lot of things that talk about who gets to lead the church. It's not very sexy, but God has appointed certain people to carry on this legacy. Peter was the first pastor installed by the Lord Jesus after his resurrection. "Peter, you love me. Feed my sheep." That's a shepherd. Also, the language of the New Testament, it's a pastor. It's someone who takes care of God's people who need it. Not to offend you, but sheep are not brilliant animals and they need a lot of tending, otherwise they get themselves in trouble and they're very vulnerable. He says, "My people are like that. They need a lot of tending and care, someone to look after them. They need a pastor is what they need."

In our own day, this has fallen on hard times. Peter ends his letter speaking of the same things that Jesus concluded his conversation with Peter. "If you

love me, take care of my people. Be a pastor." It is important, then, because all the work that we do comes from Jesus who is the Senior Pastor of the church. It comes through the legacy of men like Peter who were pastors that laid down the writings of Scripture to instruct us how to do our job, and it carries on with elders, also referred to as pastors or bishops or overseers in the New Testament. You say, "Well, what does this matter? Who cares who's in charge?" It matters greatly.

Matters greatly that Jesus Christ is the Senior Pastor; it matters greatly that his servants are like Peter: men who have been broken by their sin; have been brought to repentance; have been restored; have been called; have been sent; have been gifted; and have been given boldness and courage for the cause, and are willing to suffer if need be, sift through all the things that could be said for those things that must be said. And refute error as the misunderstandings of Jesus' word continue to linger. It's very important, and so he tells us, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed." "Be shepherds, all right? Feed my sheep."

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, not because you must. Pastors should never be pressed into their work, but because you are willing as God wants you to be." No one should be in ministry unless it was God's intention. "Not greedy for money," — you don't do it because you're lazy and don't like to get a regular job — "But eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, exercising your authority in power without diligence and without wisdom, but being examples to the flock." People are gonna follow you. "And when the Chief Shepherd," — that's the Senior Pastor, Jesus — "Appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way, be submissive to those who are older." I know that is not popular in our day.

"All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another," because God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humility — Proverbs 3:34. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him. Stand firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering." It's important who leads God's people. It is. Not everybody is called to lead. We live in a democracy, which means we think that everyone is equal and everyone should vote, and that everyone should be able to govern and self-govern and — it's not true. It's not true.

Children need parents and Christians need pastors. They need shepherds. Shepherds who are humble; who do not exercise their authority unruly; who not — are not doing their work for the money; who are not doing it for the power, the glory, or the fame; but they're doing it like Peter was told, because they love the Lord Jesus, and if you love the Lord Jesus, you do things for God's people. It's very simple. Your love for Christ is demonstrated with doing things for his people. To demonstrate that God has appointed you to care for them, and with this requires humility, because God opposes the proud, but here's the good news. There is grace for those who serve and are humble. At any point, anyone tells you that they are good at humility, they're not. The whole point of humility is a continual breaking.

It's a continual looking Jesus in the eye and saying, "I love you. You know I love you. I do love you." It is humbling. That is humility. Humility is looking Christ in the eye and honestly assessing your affection for him. It is a humbling place, but it is a place of brokenness, and when we are weak there, we are tremendously strong. There is grace for those who are humble, and what he says is he says that "The sheep need caring, that God's people need tending to, because they have an enemy. His name is Satan, and that Satan seeks to kill God's people, to destroy their lives; to lead them into folly, bitterness, sin, shame, death, lies, division: everything that the Lord Jesus died and conquered. He seeks to pull them back into that darkness and out of his glorious light." I'll close with a couple things. This is my whole life.

I look at Peter and I say, "Okay. Whatever God calls, that's what we gotta do." We gotta do it because we love Jesus, not because people are gonna respond. Sometimes you feed the sheep and they bite you. They don't even wanna eat. Some people don't even think they need a shepherd, and they go walking off cliffs, or they starve to death, or a wolf rips them up. It's like Paul says, "Man, I was shipwrecked, homeless, beaten, left-for-dead, hated, but every night I stayed up really late thinking about the church, because that's the one thing I couldn't get over. How is everybody doing?" I had the best worst day yesterday. I met with our elders, our pastors, our shepherds. Some are paid. Some are not. You know that if a man gives 20 hours a week to ministry and doesn't get paid, he's not in it for the money. All he gets to do is give his money away.

He doesn't get anything back in return. We spent the whole day studying God's Word and figuring out the future of this church and some things that God has for us. It was one of the most enjoyable moments in my whole life. I was glad to be in their company. I'm privileged to work with the elders that God has appointed over this church. It is a joy. It is a tremendous joy. As a pastor, it's nice to have pastors. It is, and, at the same time, I also received some troubling calls this week from churches that you don't know that their pastors have denied themselves to their ministry call. They've had sex with members of their congregation. The churches are devastated. They're trying to figure out what to do. The shepherds that God sent to care for the sheep decided to eat them.

I don't — it was just devastating, and the sore need in our day, I believe is that there are a multitude of people who need instruction and care, and there are a very few number of people that are actually concerned about doing that. Part of that is because there is this American brand of Christianity that has told you: your job is to have a personal relationship with Jesus, which is half-true, like all lies are. You do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. That personal relationship with Jesus is then people interpret it to mean, "Well, if I read the Bible and I pray and I love God and I have my life in order, then I've done all the things that God has called me to do." That's not the call on Peter. That's not the call on God's children. Once you have learned something, you're supposed to give that to others.

Once you've been comforted, you're supposed to comfort others with the comfort that you've received. Once God is poured into you, you are like Abraham to be a blessing to all nations of the earth. You are created by God to be restored into a place of usefulness, and if you love him, you'll do things. You say, "Well I don't know if I could be a pastor. I don't know if I can be in full-time ministry." Let's make this very simple. Jesus' ministry

with his disciples, after his resurrection, began with what activity? Breakfast. Let's not overly complicate this; breakfast. "No, I wanna be in ministry." Breakfast, breakfast. You say, "Well I'm not a great preacher." Can you cook? "I don't cook." Can you buy dinner? Can you — if you can't cook a — can you barbeque? Every guy who can't cook can at least barbeque.

There's no need to overcomplicate the Work of the Kingdom. How much ministry is done over breakfast or lunch or dinner? Say, "I wanna shepherd's God's people. I wanna follow the legacy of Peter. I wanna do whatever it," — well, how about this? Have somebody over for a meal. Just break bread with God's people and get to know them and encourage them. Instruct them. Whatever it is that God has called you to pour into them, and then receive what they have to pour into you, but, see, if we live in this narcissistic naval-gazing world, we think, "Well, I've actualized my potential. I've esteemed myself. I've met my needs. I've consumed my goods and services from God's people, therefore I have my life in order and I'm mature and now concluded." No, it is not just things to be believed. There are things to be done.

I will close with this. How many men here sense that God may be calling them to the office of elder or pastor to shepherd God's people? Would you stand and I will pray for you? Need to pray for the young men. Okay. What the world needs is a lot of shepherds, because there's a lot of people that need care. Lord God, please hear our prayers. Please raise up the men who are sensing a call to your Work, to follow Peter's words, to be humble. To not be in it for the money; to not be in it for the power or the fame or the glory; but to be in it because they love you and they can't do anything else. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are the Chief Shepherd, that you are the Senior Pastor to all of us. I thank you that you appoint your men to their tasks.

Lord God, it is my prayer for these men and all the men you'd call out of our fellowship to the work of the ministry, that, Lord God, you would work in their life like Peter. That you would break them so that they would be useful; that you would take them and do abundantly and exceedingly more than they could've ever hoped or dreamed or imagined; that, Lord God, it would be to your glory and their joy. Pray you'd make them strong so that when the enemy comes around, that they would be able to fight it. That they would be able to ward off wolves and false teachers and heretics and people who seek to destroy what you are doing. Lord God, we love you.

We thank you that we get to participate in your life, in your Work; that we don't have to wait for heaven to begin to live, but begin to live here eternally as new creations with all things passed away and all things becoming new. Lord God, I pray for our church. There are a lot of sheep. Lord God, there have been hundreds of people that have come to Christ in the last few years, and there is an abundant need for men and women who love you to shepherd and care. Lord God, please give us all humility. Please, like Christ, give us the ability to do whatever it is that you have asked us to do. Please continually have us look in the mirror and ask ourselves that question of whether or not we indeed love you, and, Lord God, may these men and may we all answer continually in the affirmative that yes, we do.

Thank you, Lord God, and please have your hands upon your servants and protect them from the evil one. Amen. Thank you, men. This is how it gets done. This is how it all gets done. Simple men love God, do simple things, and God's grace is available to the humble. At this point, we always respond, because we do not believe that God can speak to us through his Word, and we just remain. We have to respond. We respond through singing, celebrating, contemplating, confessing, partaking of communion. As you partake, I want you to remember Jesus Christ's body and blood shed for your sins. Your God came down and he died for us. Your first reaction has got to be faith.

You need to love Christ, and, as a result of that, you should do things, and, as you eat, I want you to remember that Jesus Christ is in the very way — real way he's present with us and he's set a table and he is here to have a bite to eat with us, as well. And that this is all a foreshadowing of the wedding set for the lamb in Revelation 19, where, at the end of the age, all the races and nations and cultures and tribes and languages and tongues of people sit down and love Jesus and be his bride and have a bite to eat. That is the heart of what we do. Take an offering, as well. If you're not a Christian or visitor, don't give. It's good to have you. We're not in it for the money. Peter says we can't be, so we're not. For the rest, it's an act of worship.

Lord God, we come to respond now. We thank you for your Word. Lord Jesus, I'm grateful that we even get to study the Scripture. It's a privilege and a blessing and an honor and a joy. Thank you for the past year we've spent in John's Gospel. Thank you that there is a lot that we have learned and a lot that we have learned to believe; all of that is fruitful and worthwhile. Lord God, it's my prayer now that that would become action. That as a result of what we believe. That now we would know, and we would do. Lord God, we love you. We thank you. We come to you in Christ's name, Amen.