

The Mystery of Restoration

John 21:1–19

5/18/2025

INTRO.

This morning, we step into another profound moment that unfolded between the open tomb and the upper room – a sacred interval where heaven was drawing near - and the risen Christ was revealing Himself - in mysterious and deeply personal ways ... Before we immerse ourselves in today's message, - I want to briefly take you back – to a scene that speaks of confusion, failure, love, and restoration.

The disciples had gone fishing ... Not merely to catch food—but because they didn't know what else to do ... After the trauma of the crucifixion - and the shock of the empty tomb, - they found themselves disoriented – caught between what was - and what was yet to come ... I imagine Peter especially felt the weight of this moment ... The memory of denying Jesus three times likely echoed in his soul like a thunderclap of failure ... Unsure of how to move forward, he defaulted to the familiar – he went fishing ... Seven of them climbed into Peter's boat and fished through the night – but caught nothing ... Then, - just after daybreak, - they saw a figure standing on the shore ... They didn't recognize Him at first ... Then a voice called out across the water: “Children, do you have any fish?” ... They answered, “No.” ... Then came a command: “Cast the net on the right side of the boat.” ... And as they obeyed, - the net became so full they could barely haul it in ... It was in that moment of divine abundance that John turned to Peter and said, “It is the Lord.” ... And true to his impetuous nature, Peter threw on his cloak, leapt into the water, and swam to shore - compelled not by duty, - but by love ... When the others arrived, they found Jesus already waiting with a fire prepared – fish and bread ready for them ... And He said, “Come and have breakfast.” ... After the meal, Jesus turned to Peter and engaged him in a sacred dialogue – a soul-to-soul encounter: “Do you love Me?” - He asked – not once, - but three times ... And three times Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, - You know

that I love You.” ... Each time, - Jesus recommissioned him by saying: “Feed My lambs.” ... “Tend My sheep.” ... “Feed My sheep.” ... And then – Jesus declared words of destiny ... Words of sacrifice ... Words of glory ... And He ends - with the same words - that had once begun Peter’s journey: “Follow Me.”

TRANS

This moment between Jesus and Peter isn’t about shame or condemnation ... It’s not a public rebuke, nor is it Jesus throwing Peter’s past in his face ... This is the voice of resurrection love ... This is the Lord – who once declared over him, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” - - Now calling Peter back into alignment with that very destiny ... Yes, - Peter had denied Him ... Yes, he had failed ... And I imagine he didn’t feel much like a rock anymore ... Not chosen ... Not qualified ... Just a man adrift – haunted by failure - and unable even to catch fish.

Can you relate? ... How many of us have let failure rewrite the story God once spoke over our lives? ... How many of us have allowed guilt, shame, or disappointment to drown out the voice of destiny? ... But catch this ... This is not the end of Peter’s story – and it’s not the end of yours ... If you will have ears to hear – the same risen Christ – who restored Peter – is walking the shores of your soul this morning ... Calling you back – not to where you were, - - but to who you truly are ... Today is a day of restoration ... Let your spirit be awakened - to what the Lord is about to speak over your life this morning.

Jesus Meets You in the Familiar vv. 1-14

Let me drop a spiritual nugget right from the start – are you ready? ... Restoration doesn’t begin in the clouds of ecstasy – or the fires of revival ... It begins in the ordinary ... In the mundane ... In the daily rhythms of life ... If your spirit is attuned and your inner ears are open ... You’ll often perceive the divine – as it disguises itself in the familiar.

Peter went back to fishing – not because he was passionate about it – but because he was disillusioned ... Think about it for a moment: scan through Peter’s last three years ... His name was changed by the Lord ... He witnessed the transfiguration ... He walked on water ... He was part of the inner circle – one of three – who saw things others only dreamed about ... But now, he returns to his nets ... Why? ... Maybe it was guilt ... Maybe it was shame ... The mighty Peter – the Rock – had denied the Lord three times ... Publicly ... Loudly ... This was the same Peter who had once said, “Even if I have to die with You, - - I will never deny You.” ... And now – he can’t even catch a fish.

Can you relate? ... Have you ever made bold declarations of faith – only to retreat – when the fire got hot? ... Have you heard the Lord call you – felt the tug on your heart – only to let the cares of this world drown it out? ... But look at Jesus ... He doesn’t wait for Peter to climb back up the spiritual ladder ... He didn’t wait for Peter to hit the altar during a church service ... He meets him – right in the midst of his return to the familiar ... He doesn’t organize a prayer circle around the fire with the others to rescue Peter ... He doesn’t perform a public deliverance as if Peter had been overtaken by demons ... He doesn’t shame him publicly by replaying his past declarations ... Instead, He does something holy – something intimate – something deeply restorative ... He builds a fire ... He prepares a meal ... And He invites Peter to breakfast ... Think a moment – what does this actually say about Jesus? ... It says - He’s not rattled by our failures – like we seem to be ... It says He’s more interested in restoring our future – than rehearsing our past ... It says He will walk right into the middle of our collapse – not to condemn – but to commune ... Catch this - - He still shows up on the beaches of our brokenness and failures – not with a lecture – but with bread and fish – and a quiet, loving invitation ... Jesus doesn’t wait for you to chase Him down ... He comes to the place where you’ve run off to ... To cook you breakfast ... To sit with you in the familiar – and to begin the conversation that will awaken your destiny once again.

His Healing Question – “Do you Love ME?” (vv. 15-17)

John 21:15-17 New Living Translation

After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” ... “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” ... “Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him ... 16 Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?” ... “Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.” ... “Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said ... 17 A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” ... Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time ... He said, “Lord, you know everything ... You know that I love you.” ... Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

Now typically, - when someone asks, “Do you love me?” – it carries a sting ... It’s laced with doubt, disappointment, even accusation ... But this wasn’t just any man asking ... This was the risen Christ – speaking with a voice that pierces beyond human shame and into the very marrow of the soul ... When Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” – it wasn’t condemnation – it was invitation ... It wasn’t a test – it was a healing incision – cutting through the tangled web of failure, - guilt, - and regret – right down to the core of who Peter truly was ... And something holy happened in that moment ... The question didn’t just challenge Peter ... The question cleansed him ... It shattered the residue of denial and made room for resurrection love to rush in ... What Peter heard wasn’t, “Why did you fail?” ... What he heard was, “Can we start again?” ... And that third time – when the question pierced deepest – it wasn’t to wound, but to restore ... To draw out the final splinter of shame ... Peter had denied Jesus three times ... And now, Jesus gives him three opportunities to reverse it – not through penance – but through love ... Every denial was undone by divine recommissioning ... This is the sacred place where failure becomes fuel for destiny ... Where Jesus doesn't avoid your shame – He walks straight into it and speaks to your identity ... Where He doesn't remind you of what you did - - but He reminds you of who you are. ... **Now catch this the best you can** ... Your guilt is not a barrier to Jesus ... It is the very soil where He plants the seed of resurrection calling ... This is the place where your identity awakens ... This is the place where calling is restored ... This is where love becomes more than a feeling – it becomes a foundation.

“Follow Me” – The Reactivation of Purpose (vv. 18–19)

John 21:18-19 New Living Translation

“I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go ... But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don’t want to go.” ... 19 Jesus said this to let him know by what kind of death he would glorify God ... Then Jesus told him, “Follow me.”

Catch this revelational truth ... Restoration is not simply about healing your pain or helping you feel better about yourself ... Restoration is a divine realignment ... It carries with it a re-commissioning ... It is not self-focused – it is mission-focused ... It is not about coddling your wounds – it is about removing every hindrance that keeps you from walking in the fullness of your assignment.

After the fire of His love consumes the ashes of shame, - Jesus doesn’t pat Peter on the back and say, - “You’re forgiven, - now go in peace.” ... No - - He spoke destiny ... He looked into the depths of Peter’s soul and called forth his purpose: “Feed My sheep.” ... And then He echoed the divine invitation once again - - “Follow Me.”

Now catch this - - Purpose is not the reward for being perfect ... It is not earned through your record – it is awakened through encounter ... Your destiny doesn’t flow from your strength ... It overflows from your heart that has been ignited by His grace and awakened by His love ... In Christ, your calling is not static ... It doesn’t sit frozen at the point of your last failure ... It moves ... It breathes ... It resurrects ... It journeys through denial, - through death, - and rises in union ... The voice that once called, “Follow Me,” on the shores of Galilee, now calls again ... But this time, not from the boat ... This time from the other side of your brokenness and failures ... This time, His call is bathed in resurrection light ... This is not a repeat of the former – it is a fresh – deeper summoning ... One that flows not from duty, - but from divine union ... He does not just restore the man ... He reawakens the mission ... He does not just heal the soul ... He re-anchors it in purpose ... Because in the kingdom, - restoration is not the end - - It is the beginning of a fresh – new - deeper commissioning.

TAKE AWAY

Restoration doesn't just forgive your past ... It upgrades your future ... You're not just going back to what you had ... You're stepping into what you were always meant to become ... Because when Jesus restores – He doesn't rewind – He re-creates ... He doesn't just hand you back the pieces - - He breathes on them, ignites them, and resurrects them – into a new creation being.

You may have failed due to the fire, - but now you're being forged by it ... You may have denied Him by the charcoal fire of fear, - but now He's inviting you back to the fire of communion ... This time to feast, - not flee.

This is the mystery of restoration ... It rewrites your history with resurrection ink ... It takes the place of your greatest shame and transforms it into the altar of your greatest authority ... Peter's denial wasn't the end of his story ... It became the very platform upon which grace thundered louder than guilt ... And that same voice is calling to you this morning - - "Do you love Me?" ... Not to shame you – but to awaken you ... To summon you beyond the ruins, - into the radiant place of re-commissioning ... So, don't settle for just surviving what you've been through ... Step into the upgrade ... Step into the "more" you were born for ... The fire didn't come to destroy you - - It came to refine you for glory ... So, let every failure now become an echo of resurrection power ... Let every denial give way to deeper devotion ... Let every disappointment be swallowed up by divine destiny ... You are not disqualified - - you are being redefined ... The same Jesus who met Peter at the water's edge – is walking toward you now – on the shores of your own soul – saying, - - "Follow Me - again."

Closing Prayer

Lord - - You are the Restorer of broken places, - - the Redeemer of failed moments, - - the Rewriter of every story soaked in shame ... Today, - we hear Your voice – not with fear – but with fire ... Your question, - - "Do you love Me?" - - pierces through the noise of regret, -

through the ache of disappointment, - through the walls we've built around our hearts ... And we say - - Yes, Lord, - - You know ... You know the truth of our hearts ... You know our love, - though feeble at times, - reaches for You still ... Now breathe upon us again ... Speak into the ashes of our yesterdays - and awaken our tomorrows ... Let Your love burn away every trace of guilt, - - and let Your grace unchain every calling - that we've abandoned or forgotten ... We receive Your restoration – not as a return to the old – but as an entrance into the new ... Not as a patchwork fix – but as a resurrection upgrade ... Recommission us, Lord ... Speak destiny over us again ... Call us from the shores of our own brokenness and failures – and we will follow You once again ... With hearts awakened by love – with eyes lifted by hope – and with feet ready to walk in purpose ... In the name of the risen King – Who meets us in the familiar - and calls us into the eternal - - Amen.